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the office
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BEIJING YOUTH DAILY

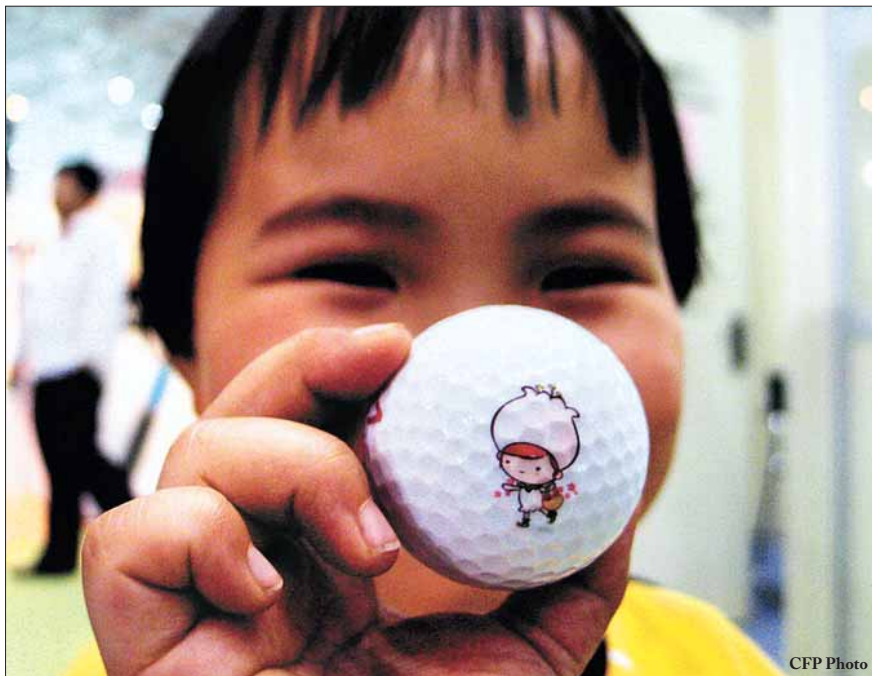


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China, the next golf center?



CFP Photo

With the decision to add golf to the 12th Chinese National Games in 2013 and the 2016 Olympic Games, the government is expected to adjust its restrictions and allow hundreds of courses to be built during the next several years.

Some believe the country will usurp Japan as Asia's center of golf. Parents share that optimism, and many are sending their children to study the sport that only three decades ago was too bourgeoisie for play.

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CHINESE RESTAURANT

Subway may reach Hebei to form 'one-hour metro' area

By Chu Meng

The city is considering extending its rapidly growing subway network to Hebei Province to establish a "one-hour metropolitan area."

The new rails would link Beijing to the surrounding cities of Yanjiao, Langfang, Zhuozhou and Baoding in Hebei Province, said Zhang Gong, director of the Beijing Municipal Commission of Development and Reform at the 12th National People's Congress Monday.

Zhang said the rail line would help to establish satellite cities for the capital. "It will help lower costs not only for labor transportation, but also for industrial logistics," she said. Beijing's city planning departments previously said intercity rail lines rather than subways would be the ideal solution.

The program would begin during the 12th Five-Year Plan period.

"As the country's first trans-provincial subway system, the ultimate goal is to build urban satellites around Beijing to relieve land pressure in downtown," Yang Kaizhong, vice president of Peking University's Beijing Development Institute, said.

Yang used the "Ant Tribe" as an example. Based on conservative estimates, there are 100,000 "Ant Tribe" people living on the urban fringe or rural areas between Beijing and Hebei Province.



Beijing is working to further extend its subway network.

CFP Photo

These low-income college graduates born in the 1980s earn an average monthly income of less than 2,000 yuan.

"Currently there are only two bus routes open to them, and both involve a four-hour commute. The opening of a trans-provincial subway would be hugely beneficial for this group," Yang said.

The subway would mean enhanced cooperation with Hebei

Province, especially in transportation infrastructure. It could speed up the development of the proposed Beijing-Zhangjiakou, Beijing-Tangshan, Beijing-Chengde and Beijing-Shijiazhuang high-speed railway lines.

The city also unveiled its plan for a new high-speed ring road around Beijing's fringe areas to relieve traffic pressure this year. Construction will tap Hebei's

existing road network to ease traffic pressure caused by vehicles passing through to other provinces, municipalities or autonomous regions.

Zhang said this "grand outer ring road of Beijing" will mainly be based on Hebei's existing road network. Planners hope it would draw away vehicles that have no need of stopping in the metropolis proper.

Local woman puts home ownership before husbands

By Chu Meng

Chen Jing, a 26-year-old who works for one of the city's top wedding ring makers, earns about 7,000 yuan a month.

Recently, her boyfriend proposed to her in her office and gave her a diamond engagement ring to the envy of her co-workers.

But just one month before that, Chen bought herself a 60-square-meter fully furnished apartment in the Pingod residential area. She registered the home in her own name, making it pre-nuptial property.

Many women Chen's age are doing the same.

According to statistics presented by Beijing Zhong Yuan Real Estate Agent on Tuesday, the number of single young women buying apartments before marriage in Beijing has been growing for three years. This month, it broke the 10 percent milestone for all housing transactions.

"The main reason is that housing prices in Beijing are increasing too fast. More and more women have realized that investing in housing is more reliable than anything else," said Zhang Dawei, a researcher from the agency.

That Chinese tradition that a man should provide a home for his wife is also blurring as single women become more independent and selective about their marriages.

"Another reason might be because the number 'left-over girls' in the metropolitan city of Beijing has surpassed the number of single men. Women are buying homes to be more competitive," Zhang said.

Most single female real estate owners were born in the 1980s. Over 90 percent of the apartment purchases have been for 60-square-meter units in the city's more expensive communities using. The homes are purchased with a loan; typically the woman's parents assist with the down payment.

"Marriage is not my only option. I am 30 and still single, but don't feel any pressure. Why are women given a deadline for marriage?" said Lu Huafang, another office worker who bought a 40-square-meter apartment in 2009. Two months later she got married.

"My husband treats me well and earns a reliable paycheck. But I feel much more confident with a home of my own. Besides, we can rent it out to get extra money," she said.

A 50-square-meter fully-furnished apartment within Second Ring Road sold for 800,000 yuan in November 2008; today the same unit is being resold for 1.6 million yuan.

"During the craziest time, housing costs leapt 2,000 yuan per square meter every three days," Zhang said.

Another group of buyers are married 20-somethings with a baby on the way. "Most of them use the lifetime savings of their parents or borrow money from their grandparents for the down payment," Zhang said.

Xicheng court rules in favor of fired union organizer, freezes employer's assets

By Zhao Hongyi

A woman who successfully sued her foreign employer after she was fired for starting a union finally received her court-awarded damages after the courts froze the company's assets for its refusal to pay.

Cui Fang (pseudonym), was the HR manager of the Beijing branch of Saatchi & Saatchi, an advertising agency, for several years before it merged with Reed Business Info in October 2008. After the merger, Cui signed a three-year contract with Reed for a yearly salary of 145,200 yuan.

After the merger, she wanted to establish a worker's union to protect employee interests. Her co-workers elected her chairman of the union, and she used the company's seal in secret and signed on behalf of the Reed chairman to register at the Workers' Union Xicheng Branch at the end of 2008.

Taking revenge, Reed fired her at the start of 2009 and refused to pay the compensation stipulated in her contract. Cui responded by filing suit in the Xicheng District Court of Beijing, seeking 600,000 yuan in damages.

At the trial, the district workers' union spoke in her support.



Shijiazhuang, Hebei Province, appeals for a yearly pay increase.

CFP Photo

The court found that employees of all companies have a legal right to start their own union based on the national Trade Union Law, and that employers are prohibited from interfering.

The court also found that Cui's use of the company seal was unnecessary. It awarded her 410,000 yuan in compensation for lost earnings.

After Reed refused to pay Cui's damages for a year, the court froze its assets at the end

of 2009 and transferred the compensation to Cui from the frozen assets.

The case recalls the specter of Wal-Mart in 2005, when the foreign retail giant was slammed for not allowing its workers to unionize.

One year later, in July 2006, Wal-Mart caved to pressure and met with unexpected results: its unionized labor force devoted more energy to the company, boosting its business in China.

"Workers' unions in China are different from those in the US," Dong Yuguo, public relations supervisor of Wal-Mart China, says. "Here, they know the importance of harmony and business growth and have no interest in conflict."

Encouraged by Wal-Mart, the All-China Federation of Trade Union (ACFTU) started promoting the establishment of workers' unions after 2007. So far, most foreign-invested companies have set up a union: only the small or private companies remain exempt.

"We expect the unions to be channels and platforms for the employers and employees to communicate on issues like business development, welfare and profit sharing," Wang Ying, director of the ACFTU's grassroots efforts, says.

Welfare includes annual leave, steady pay increases and a one-year maternity leave.

"Such welfare and benefits are common in the West," says Guo Wencai, chairman of the workers' union in the Suzhou-based Sony Chemical Corporation. "The workers' union is a partner of our company instead of its rival."



It can be very difficult to identify rescued women.

Illegal marriage, peaceful life

Lo Nhung (pseudonym), 41, was born in Thai Nguyen, a northern Vietnamese province where she was the eldest of seven children.

She lived there until one of her friends took her to China and sold her to a man in rural Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region in 1993.

"My friend promised me she would introduce me to some good marriage partners in China. She said I wouldn't be responsible for any household duties in China, so I came with her. But I found I had to do everything after marriage," she said.

Lo got along with the villagers in the days that followed. Whenever she encountered problems, local residents were usually ready to help.

She and her husband make their living by planting mulberry trees and raising silkworms. After years of hard work, they have saved enough to build a new house.

While her husband is not a bad man, she laments his gambling habits. The couple has two children now: a son and a daughter.

"My son's name is Zhongnan, a portmanteau of China and Vietnam," she said.

Many other Vietnamese women in rural areas of Guangxi lead a similar life.

"In rural areas, where there are far more boys than girls, men can hardly find wives, so when they get a wife from outside, the family treats the woman very well," said Sun Xiaoying, a researcher at the Guangxi Academy of Social Sciences who has been studying abducted and trafficked Vietnamese women's issues for years.

"Of course, the women's characters also win respect from their new families. So generally speaking, their lives are not bad," Sun said.

Many women who return to Vietnam to visit their families help to introduce friends to Chinese men. Others push other women into similar illegal matchmaking services, Sun said.

Lo has returned to Vietnam three times since she married: two of those times she brought back women to be married off. She took Chu Phuong, 48, and Trung Mai, 43, who was a little bit retarded, to Anning village, Jingxi County, Guangxi, in 1996 and was paid 3,500 yuan for each by their future husbands.

"Many Vietnamese women who marry in China return home to lure in others for profit," Sun said.

Roses and thorns

The lives of trafficked Vietnamese women

By Li Zhixin

While many Vietnamese women are willing to marry Chinese men, recent years have seen a dwindling supply of willing brides and a surge in demand by China's predominantly male populace.

Today, Vietnamese women are being kidnapped and trafficked into China to serve as brides. Once in the country, they are left to live with no legal identity or standing.

But some of the women say that might not be so bad.

Shady world of forced prostitution

During the 1980s to 1990s, Vietnamese women smuggled into China were predominantly used as brides.

That is changing in the new millennium.

"With society becoming more stable and the economy more prosperous in Vietnam, Vietnamese women are less enthusiastic about seeking men abroad. In response, smugglers have started abducting them and forcing them to work as prostitutes in China," Sun said.

Nghiem Thien (pseudonym), 30, was born in Vietnam's Phu Tho province. Her parents were public servants and she received a good education. Her college major was tourism.

Nghiem worked as a secretary for an England-Vietnam joint venture in Hanoi, the national capital, after graduating in 2002 and earned 1 million dong (355 yuan) monthly.

Misfortune came within a year when one of her friends asked her to go to a temple in Quang Ninh province with a group of other friends to pray after Spring Festival. She never realized it was a trap.

"I didn't want to go with her at the beginning, but she phoned me dozens of times and asked me to be a temporary tour guide, so I agreed," she said.

The next morning, Nghiem met her friends and two



Women are released at the border after repatriation. Many are soon abducted again. CFP Photos

strange people at the appointed place. They took a bus to the destination, but she got carsick. The two strangers offered her pills claiming they were for motion sickness.

"I couldn't focus after taking the pills. I was taken to a four-story building and a 40-something Vietnamese woman told me that my friends sold me for 8,000 yuan," she said.

The woman confiscated all her belongings, including her ID card, bank card, phone card and jewelry, and then forced her to strip and sit on the cold cement floor.

Nghiem was given two choices: she could marry a strange Chinese man or become a prostitute.

"She told me that if I chose to be a prostitute, I could

return to Vietnam in one year. If I chose to marry, I would be sent to a remote mountain village in China where my husband would probably be old or handicapped," she said.

The woman told her she would be unable to leave until she gave birth to two or three children. "I begged her a million times but her heart was harder than stone. She told me she would kill me if I tried to resist," she said.

Later, the woman called two Vietnamese men to beat Nghiem's genitals with an iron pipe and the heel of a shoe.

"No matter how I begged them to stop, they turned a deaf ear. They just kept insisting I make a decision," she said.

She yielded after four days of beatings and starvation. "I

was thinking I had to survive in order to unite with my parents one day. I had to let them know what happened to me," she said.

For the next three years she was sent to work as a prostitute.

Sometimes she had to provide sex a dozen times a day, and had an abortion during that time. Shortly before she was recovered by Chinese police, Nghiem was sold off to another woman in Guangdong Province because her pimps said she was not working as hard as they expected.

"I felt I had no dignity at all," she said. "I could have had a good life, but it was ruined by those smugglers," she said.

"I hate them. To death."

Helping Vietnamese victims to return home

"The women who have families in China can't be forcibly repatriated because they have spent so many years integrated into local life. Forceful repatriation could be harmful to them and their children," Sun said. "[But] if they are not repatriated, they have to face many problems here because their marriage is considered illegal."

"It is hard for their children to get a hukou, which will guarantee many things when they seek education, employment and social benefits," Sun said.

Most Vietnamese

women rescued by Chinese police in the past decade were unwilling prostitutes.

"Smugglers have started abusing, drugging and raping the women until they submit to working as a prostitute. It only makes their crimes more sinister and harder to expose," said Yuan Guangrong, director of the Department of Public Security in Guangxi.

"Even if Chinese police arrest them, they are usually just repatriated to Vietnam instead of facing criminal prosecution in China. Sending them to Vietnam is like releasing a

tiger in the jungle. They will be back to trafficking women in no time."

It is also very difficult to identify rescued women, so many cannot return home through regular channels. "Repatriating women identified by the Vietnamese police is usually a smooth process, but those who are totally unknown are at serious risk. Even if they get back into Vietnam, they would be fast prey for a smuggler. They often jump out of the jungle and ambush women as soon as the police leave," he said.

China has been trying to stop the trafficking of Vietnamese women since the mid 1980s. The Ministry of Public Security has carried out yearly campaigns to counter smugglers since the early 1990s: it has been cooperating with Vietnam since 2004.

"But with the opening of the Greater Mekong Subregion, this area has become a hotspot for the abducting and trafficking of women and children. Estimates say more than 10,000 women have been abducted and trafficked in the region since the 1990s," Sun said.

Olympic golf may force sport's opening to the public

By Han Manman

Up until the mid-1980s, golf was banned for being too bourgeois; today, China may be the future of the sport despite a moratorium on new course construction.

With the recent decision to add golf to the 12th Chinese National Games in 2013 and the 2016 Olympic Games, experts predict the government will adjust its restrictive policies and allow the construction of hundreds of courses during the next several years.

Boom time for golf

Pan Jie, mother of an 8-year-old boy, is now considering sending her kids to learn golf as she believes the sport has a bright future in China and will become part of the modern lifestyle after the Olympics.

"I thought of letting my boy take golf lessons two years ago. At that time, golf was a luxury game and few children learned it," Pan said.

However, after hearing golf will be in the Olympics, she made up her mind as she believes the sport will soon be popular in the country.

Many parents share Pan's optimism.

Hao Zhen, a consultant at Central Golf Beijing, the largest indoor golf center in Asia, said his club has seen a leap in enrollment among teens and children since last year.

"We received phone calls from many parents asking if we have any training course for their children," Hao said, adding that the youngest student in the club was 6 years old.

Hao said training is quite expensive. A basic training course for children, including eight half-hour lessons and eight half-hour golf-playing classes, costs 2,500 yuan.

"The parents who send their children here to study golf are at least middle class with a yearly income of over 1 million yuan," Hao said. "The working class does not yet have the ability to play such a luxury sport."

"Even before the recent decision to make it an Olympic sport, golf's growth potential was shifting to China," John Strawn, CEO of the Robert Trent Jones II design firm, which built the Anting Golf Club in Shanghai, told *Executive Travel Magazine*.

"North America has a mature golf economy, as do the UK and even Scandinavia," Strawn said. "Japan hit its peak in the early 1990s. China is the center of the action now."

"It's highly possible that by 2050, the world's best players will be Chinese and the world's biggest tournaments will be in China," he said.

A boom in golf over the last few years produced 3 million new players – an annual increase of 50 percent, according to China Golf Association (CGA) and it predicting up to 20 million in just over a decade.



Many parents hope their children will be able to learn golf.

Dominated by illegal greens

The pace of golf-course development has caused concerns about the dwindling amount of agricultural land.

Central government authorities ordered a nationwide moratorium on new courses in 2004 and it announced plans to crack down on illegal golf courses.

Development, of course, has continued if not accelerated as revenue-minded local officials do whatever they want, even offering tax breaks for operators of new courses.

In Hainan Province alone, now home of a "special golf development zone," between 100 and 300 courses are being constructed. Among them is the Hong Kong's Mission Hills Group's Hainan club, which – when completed – will be the world's largest with 22 courses covering an area 1.5 times the size of Manhattan.

Only one of Beijing's 20 golf courses – the one, near the Ming Dynasty Tombs in Changping

district – is legal, according to Sun Anmin, vice director of the National People's Congress Legal Affairs Commission.

In a country with so little farmland per head, it was "quite ridiculous" to allow a course to take up 40 to 50 hectares of land, said Dong Zuojin, the head of land planning at the Ministry of Land and Natural Resources. He said each course required 3,000 cubic meters of water – a particular issue in the north, where water is already in dire shortage.

China's first golf course was built in 1984; 500 more have sprung up since.

"The existing 500 courses are enough for the basic development of the sport," CGA vice president Wang Liwei said.

"No matter how many course there are – 500, 1,000 or 10,000 – it is a sport of players. We are taking alternate measures, such as building driving ranges in public green spaces," he said.

Struggle for popularity

The decision to add golf to the Olympic program has helped rekindle Chinese interest in developing the sport. Its inclusion is seen as a key factor in the allocation of resources by the state-run sports systems.

"After golf enters the Olympics, it will no longer be a sport for the nobility," said Zhao Baozhong, a coach at Beijing's Riverside Resort Golf Academy. "The government will put in effort in every province. In 10 to 20 years, golf will be like table tennis and badminton, and Chinese golfers will dominate the world rankings," Zhao said.

Experts and coaches may be thrilled about the good prospects for golf development, but playing remains prohibitively expensive for all but the richest Chinese. Joining a club cost an average of 360,000 yuan in 2008, according to a KPMG report.

That makes the CGA's

struggle to popularize the game among China's 1.3 billion people an uphill battle: how to lower the golf threshold in China is a big question.

Zhang Xiaoning, head of the CGA, said golf should not be a privilege reserved for the rich.

"China is still in its infancy. If we want to achieve something at the Olympics, China must figure out how to make the sport popular and improve access to it nationwide," Zhang said.

He said the sports ministry is already working on ways to change the perception of golf, starting with an attempt to reduce the tax paid by the country's 500 golf courses, presumably so the exorbitant green fees can be reduced.

"The Olympic and National Games' decision will be a game-changer for golf in China, which means it will draw greater attention and support from provincial sports authorities," Wang said.

The CGA plans to popularize the sport among the youth and offer more free opportunities for children to participate in the sport. Clubs are offering their spare resources for the youth push, Wang said.

The Olympics may spur the government to spend more on public-oriented golf programs and push the construction of more public golf courses to lower the sport's costly entry barrier.

"Golf may enjoy explosive growth in China after that," he said.



Provinces have ignored the central government's ban on the development of new golf courses.

IC Photos

Age of E-congress

Debate over future takes flight on Internet



What big steps should China take in the next few years? As the two annual parliamentary sessions continue, a parallel gathering is also debating the country's future.

This is the online discussion among the country's 380 million Internet users, many of whom offered proposals to the country's leaders.



Online congress

While the Internet can be utilized to disrupt social stability, it is also a valuable way of gauging public opinion.

The People's Daily e-congress – a forum where netizens can share their thoughts as the National People's Congress (NPC) and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) sessions unfold – is part of the latter effort.

The most popular proposal on the site, from among 4,500 voted on, called for a crackdown on property speculators, a reflection of public anger over rising real-estate prices in metropolises such as Beijing and Shanghai.

The second most popular was a proposal to expand the use of the death penalty in dealing with corrupt government officials. Both suggestions drew several thousand votes.

Delegates taking part in the proceedings at the Great Hall of the People agreed that the online community has become a significant player in the political arena.

"All their concerns have been heard and are being discussed by the government. But there are certainly some differences between what concerns netizens most and what concerns the government most," Xin Yi, a deputy from Jiangsu Province, said.

Mao Shoulong, a professor of public administration at Renmin University, said netizens' influence has palpably increased this year. "The Premier didn't meet NPC delegates or journalists ahead of [last Friday's] meeting, but he talked to netizens," Mao said.

"The leaders are trying to gather information from the Internet and at the same time make adjustments to meet the needs of the Internet age," he said.

Delegates take up microblogging

Members of the two legislative sessions have not allowed themselves to lag behind the newest communications platforms.

He Shuifa, a member of the CPPCC, finds a quiet spot outside the meeting rooms whenever he can to post short updates online

through his mobile phone.

"We discussed the speech delivered by Jia Qinglin and members of my group enthusiastically raised issues that concerned them," He, representing Zhejiang Province, said, referring to the CPPCC National Committee chairman's speech.

He, 46, is one of a growing number of CPPCC members who have turned to microblogging this year.

The platform differs from a traditional blog by having reduced content. A microblog entry can be made up of just a short sentence, much like a tweet.

"I think sharing my personal experience is one of the most effective ways for people to understand the meetings. The more information we provide, the more trust we, as CPPCC members, gain from people," He said.

Several CPPCC members – as well as a number of NPC deputies – attracted attention for starting personal blogs during previous sessions.

(Agencies)

US expert

'Put people first' policy a noble idea

China's policy to "put people first" in its efforts to build a harmonious society is a noble idea, Richard Baum, a former director of the Center for Chinese Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), said at the NPC session.

He said it is a major step forward for the government to stress the need to respect human dignity, and more work needs to be done, especially at the local level.

"To put people first, local governments should be made to account for their behavior," Baum said, adding that the central government "has done a good job" of defining what people's rights are.

The expert noted that China has been making concerted efforts to reduce the gap between the rich and the poor, between developed and developing areas, between rural and urban areas, between coastal and interior provinces and between large state enterprises and small private businesses.

"China has started to put more investment into the interior (provinces), and that's good. It shows the real commitment of China to raise the living standards of the public," Baum said.

He said that a decent living standard is necessary to make people lead more fulfilled, dignified lives, and the first step is to make sure that poverty is eradicated. China has made efforts in this area, he added.

Baum regularly visits the country and is very active in the research of issues concerning China.

(Xinhua)

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BYD plugs into LA

China's 'green tech' cars to be built in US

Chinese carmaker BYD, or Build Your Dreams, made headlines in California as it is considering locating its US office and assembly line in the state. The plant is expected to create high-paying jobs in a state hit by the recent recession.

But the question remains: can an automaker from China capitalize on the Toyota recall scandal to expand its overseas market?



Wang Chuanfu, chairman of BYD Auto, presents the new electric car. It premiered at the recent Geneva auto show. IC Photo

California woos BYD

BYD may build an assembly plant and open its North American headquarters in Los Angeles County, according to a report Tuesday.

The *Los Angeles Business Journal*, citing unnamed sources, reported that the BYD plant could top 1 million square feet in size and create hundreds of jobs.

An announcement on the location of the company's US headquarters could come within the next few months, while any decision on an assembly plant would follow, the report said.

A representative for BYD, however, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

It is believed the headquarters of BYD in the US will be situated at the plant, which is expected to fill 9 hectares of assembly and office space, the report said.

BYD may build a dream in California after it has teamed up with German auto giant Daimler-Benz to manufacture an A-class electric vehicle.

As one of the world's largest rechargeable battery and consumer electronics

makers, BYD entered the US market this year with its electric car model BYD E6 through the North American International Auto Show in Detroit.

Local authorities from both Los Angeles County and Los Angeles City reportedly met BYD executives to woo the firm to put up its office and assembly line on their premises.

Several other places, including Long Beach and Lancaster, have also joined the race to attract the attention of China's fourth biggest carmaker.

"It would be a tremendous boost to our economy and economic growth and prosperity," said Tony Bell, spokesman for Los Angeles County Supervisor Michael Antonovich.

Selling cars in Europe

The US market aside, BYD plans to start selling electric and hybrid cars in western Europe next year to cash in on rising demand for fuel-efficient vehicles, Bloomberg reported.

The first batch of BYD models to hit the European market will include the E6 electric car, company spokesman Paul Lin said.

The carmaker, based in Shenzhen and 10 percent owned by Warren Buffett's Berkshire Hathaway, may design and build cars in Europe.

As the fastest-growing Chinese automaker in 2009, BYD plans to begin selling its electric cars in the US later this year and then in Europe next year as consumers seek to curb spending on gasoline and reduce emissions. The company will soon start selling the E6 model in its home market.

BYD is also teaming up with Daimler AG to develop an electric vehicle to be sold in China, they said last week. That model may be sold overseas in the future, Lin said today.

In May 2009, BYD signed an electric-vehicle deal with Europe's largest automaker Volkswagen. The two companies will cooperate in areas including hybrid cars and lithium battery-powered electric vehicles.

BYD aims to export up to 10 percent of the 800,000 vehicles it will produce and sell this year, a sharp increase from last year when it exported about 2.2 percent of its 450,000 vehicles. (Xinhua)

Analysis Will Buffett-backed BYD succeed overseas?

By Huang Daohu

With the reputation of Toyota's Prius tarnished, the company backed by Warren Buffett could hardly have found a better time to roll out its green cars in the US and Europe, said Wen Yijun, a senior industrial analyst with Oriental Securities.

This could be a defining year for the electric car, particularly for companies like BYD who are starting up their overseas business, Wen said.

People in the US are squeezing their wallets and focusing on energy-saving, low-carbon vehicles, so the electric car is a popular choice, he said.

Wen said Southern California makes sense as a headquarters location for the company. It's the biggest auto market in the

US and recently has seen an explosion of "green tech" firms involved in electric vehicle production.

The addition of BYD to the local green tech marketplace would prevent the county from becoming a new Detroit, he said.

While BYD may not have enormous experience with electric vehicles, Wen said it has a proven track record. In 2008, BYD attracted Buffett's attention thanks to its green-car strategy.

Its Berkshire Hathaway connection has also separated BYD from other alternative-energy car makers.

"Everyone knows Warren Buffett is a very serious guy, so if he's investing in BYD you have to take anything that might be coming from that company seriously," Wen

said. "BYD certainly should have the faith of pretty strong investors in US."

But, BYD has plenty of obstacles still to overcome. According to Bloomberg News, the company only sold 48 of its hybrids in China last year and hasn't even begun selling its E6 electric car in the Chinese market.

Still, the Toyota scandal could prove to be a great opportunity for BYD, Wen said. Before the recalls, many would have doubted BYD's ability to close the quality gap.

"Now that Toyota has stumbled so badly, BYD will have an easier job selling consumers on the idea there's not that much difference between itself and the mighty Toyota," he said.

CNOOC and Sinochem win bid for Iraqi oilfield

Iraqi officials said a consortium led by China National Offshore Oil Corporation (CNOOC) is expected to win the bid for the Missan oilfields in southern Iraq, the *Wall Street Journal* reported.

The consortium accepted the price offered by the government of Iraq. The oilfield has reserves of about 2.5 billion barrels.

An Iraqi official said the Iraqi Oil Ministry has ended negotiations with CNOOC and its partner Sinochem International on matters relating to development of three Missan oil fields, and has submitted a draft contract to the Iraqi Cabinet.

An Iraqi Oil Ministry spokesman said the two Chinese companies have accepted the price offered by the Ministry of Oil. Iraq has set the lowest oil production target at 275,000 barrels per day. If the Chinese companies can exceed this target, China will be granted a service charge of \$2.30 (15 yuan) per barrel from the Iraqi government.

The field's current production is 100,000 barrels per day.

Suning asks for end to foreign privilege

Unfair competition was the main reason for the decline of domestic companies in the retail market, said Zhang Jindong, Suning Appliance Group's board chairman, as he called on local governments to remove the privileges given to foreign retailers to attract overseas investment.

Zhang said in order to attract investment, local governments granted many privileges to foreign enterprises in land prices and rental costs, which reduced the competitive edge for domestic companies, the *Beijing Morning Post* reported Monday.

"How can domestic companies compete with their foreign counterparts when their rental cost is 2 yuan per day while the foreign companies only have to pay 0.2 yuan?" Zhang said.

Zhang said McKinsey & Co. predicted that 60 percent of China's retail market will be dominated by 35 global retail giants in 35 years. That would mean severe consequences for China, he said.

Subway eyes match against McDonald's

US sandwich chain Subway hopes to match McDonald's in China in terms of total stores within 10 years, Subway president Fred DeLuca said Monday.

DeLuca, who founded Subway in 1965 at the age of 17, said China had great growth potential and his company is targeting 500 additional restaurants in the next five years, with 35 to 50 set to open this year.

"If we accomplish that, then maybe in another five years we may be able to match McDonald's store count," DeLuca said.

The two chains are currently neck and neck in total stores worldwide, with about 32,000 each.

(Agencies)

Thanks to Mom or the Motherland?



Skater Zhou Yang was criticized for thanking her family but not her country. CFP Photo

Olympian's failure to acknowledge motherland ruffles feathers

By Chu Meng

Zhou Yang, a gold medalist at the Vancouver Olympics, has received a barrage of criticism for thank-you remarks she made right after winning the women's 1,500-meter short-track speed skating event last month.

In an interview by the China Central Television Station (CCTV), Zhou thanked her parents' support for her win – but did not acknowledge the motherland, her critics said.

Her parents publicly apologized for the 18-year-old Wednesday, saying her blunder was a result of her youth.

"The kid is too young, too simple and does not have much social experience, but her words were heartfelt. Her father and I were touched by what she said," Zhou's mother Wang Shuying said.

"But of course, once we sent her to join the national team, she became a daughter of the country. She has won pride for the country," Wang said.

The speed skater became something of a national hero after her success at the Winter Games. But the girl from an impoverished family in Jilin Province also became an idol to millions of youngsters with her unconventionally candid remarks in front of the TV camera.

"The gold medal will bring a lot of changes to my life. I will be more confident and it will improve the life of my parents," she said.

Yu Zaiqing, deputy director of the National Sports Bureau and a vice chairman of the International Olympic Committee, criticized Zhou last Sunday at a group discussion of the National Committee of the

Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC).

"It is fine to thank your mom and dad for the gold medal, but one needs to thank the country first and foremost," Yu said.

"We know very well how much the country needs to invest in athletes in order to make them champions. Zhou's coach even told me that whenever she said that training was over, the kid would say, 'Got it, step-mother,'" he said.

"Calling her coach stepmother is a sort of joke, but the coach said that a step-mother is also a kind of mother. There is just a need to strengthen the moral education of young athletes."

But Gao Jian, a CPPCC National Committee member and former director of the National Gymnastics Center, defended Yu's remarks, saying they were taken out of context. Yu's comments were actually made during a panel discussion on "motivational education" for the national taekwondo team, Gao said.

"During the first two days of panel discussions, we all talked about Yang Zhou. We were all touched by her entirely heartfelt words," he said.

This Monday, Zhou Yang clearly made amendments in her thank-you speech during an interview with 163.com. She acknowledged her parents last.

"On winning the gold medal, I would like to thank my own country for giving me such a great opportunity to participate in the Vancouver Winter Olympics. I would like to thank my coaches, my team's staff, my hundreds of supporters and my parents."

Comment

Daughter's appreciation

You're a champion that's why the motherland embraces you. If you were not, only your mother would hug you. Regardless of whether Zhou Yang actually deserves the honor, there is nothing wrong with thanking her parents.

– Chen Danling, netizen

Unconventional straight talk

Such straight talk breaks the tradition of Chinese athletes feeling obliged to thank the government. Aided by a highly centralized and heavily funded training system, China has emerged as a sports powerhouse in recent years. Nevertheless, more and more people are questioning the rationale of a system that ignores or abandons unsuccessful athletes.

– Guo Jian, sports reporter on

Sohu.com's sports channel

Better than diplomatic words

Athletes are athletes; they are not diplomats, and certainly not writers. Their sometimes "reckless" statements express more personality, more honesty than flowery diplomatic words.

– Hilde Sortie, project officer at the Norwegian Embassy in Beijing

Diversity is normal

Why do people need to take these remarks so seriously? Looking at thank-you speeches delivered by sports stars, they express their thanks in different ways.

– Nancy Pelligriani, reporter

from Time Out Beijing

Academy launches department to teach humor

By Liang Meilan

Are comedy skills inborn or talent that is nurtured? Believing in the latter's crucial role, the Beijing Film Academy this year established an academic degree in cross talk and comedy performance.

This pioneering effort has led many to ask if a college education is truly necessary for cross-talk performers and if it can produce star comedians.

Cross talk, or *xiangsheng*, is a traditional comedy performance involving two people bantering a rapid-fire dialogue. Since the 19th century, the skill has traditionally been passed on from master to apprentice through years of tutelage and practice. Most of today's renowned cross-talk performers perfected the craft this way.

Apprenticeship has also made cross-talk artists one big family: the name of a successful apprentice

is entered into the "cross-talk family tree," which is now 10 generations long.

But tradition took a twist this year. The Beijing Film Academy is offering a bachelor's degree in cross talk and comedy performance, which involves four years of stage performance courses and training in the cross-talk style of speaking, imitating, teasing and singing.

"Giving academic training to would-be cross-talk performers will respond to a need in society. My original intention was to incorporate cross-talk skills training into the performance institute's curriculum and develop cross-talk artists adept at TV and stage performances," said Fang Gong, a cross talk master who is supervising the academic program.

Some 900 people applied to join the program, but only 20 have been accepted after three stringent rounds of evaluation.



Guo Degang (left) is a popular cross-talk performer who did not even complete junior high school. IC Photo

Comment

For Higher education a boon to tradition

Academic education is a sustainable and scientific way to keep the traditional art of cross talk alive. Many young people are keen to listen and learn the art, and formal education provides them help.

– Jiang Kun, cross-talk artist and secretary of the Chinese Ballad Singers Association

Cultivating talent the modern way

A cross-talk graduate will not only be competent in the art but will also be skilled at conceptualizing and writing comedy, one of the program's emphases.

Students will also learn about program hosting. This academic program is an exploration of a modern multimedia way of training comedians.

– Wang Jingsong, vice principal of the Beijing Film Academy

Against

No substitute for masters

Cross talk is an art of talking rather than a performance skill. Performance art teaches people to handle different roles, while cross talk helps people to discover themselves.

The humor in cross talk relies on a performer's communication with the audience. Without sufficient qualified teachers, the film academy cannot be the right place to train crosstalk artists, let alone masters.

– Xue Baokun, honorary chairman of the Chinese Ballad Singers Association Practice is the key

Many students choose cross talk as an alternate major for fear of failing in their first choice. This means many of them don't want to learn cross talk for cross talk's sake. As a former cross-talk major, I say experience and practice on campus benefited me the most, not academic knowledge.

– Gao Xiaopan, head of Hip-hop Crosstalk Society



Alia Malik

By Wang Yu

A year after its establishment, Shangri-La Farms coffee is sold in 50 shops in Beijing. The venture, founded by Sarah and Alia Malik from New York, was born of a desire to promote fair-trade practices and support small farmers in Yunnan Province.

Fair trade coffee from Shangri-La

The Malik sisters first came to China in 2003 to join their mother who runs an NGO in Yunnan's Shangri-La region. Alia, the younger sister whose background is in NGO work, last year decided to help local farmers with beekeeping.

A few months later, the young women came across a local farmers' roasting co-op. Its delicious coffee inspired them to support the efforts of small coffee-bean farmers.

"The average income of farmers there is less than \$300 (2,050 yuan)," says Alia, who studied development economics at Georgetown University and obtained her master's at Cambridge University.

Sarah, who was then working full-time in advertising and graphic design, decided to quit her job to start a coffee-making business. Shangri-La Farms now grows six types of coffees and its farmers earn four times their original profit.

The sisters are guided by the

fair-trade philosophy, a market-based approach that aims to help producers in developing countries obtain better trading conditions and promote sustainability. It advocates the payment of a higher price to producers as well as social and environmental standards.

Meanwhile, part of the company's earnings are donated to a foundation that helps train the farmers. Shangri-La has also employed young professionals who live in the village and train its workers.

In 2008, the Maliks invited organic beekeeping experts to give lessons to the farmers. But the program did not succeed because the farmers could not deal with the problems on their own.

But Alia remains hopeful that Shangri-La is on the right path. "The most important thing is to let people know why they should bother to learn something new," she says. "If you let the farmers know why and

share your vision with them, the relationship between the investor and the community goes further. But it takes time."

Since then, the company has also successfully produced honey and botanical products.

"We tried a lot of things to find a practical venture. Making honey and botanical products like cold-crafted soaps is easier. Local farmers who take up beekeeping can earn extra income. It also helps to take pressure off the environment, promotes biodiversity through pollination and eases the burden on women as they can do these things closer to home," Alia says.

Though Shangri-La Farms is still going through official registration, it has the support of the local government, which is grateful for the company's contributions to the rural economy.

"In Kenya where I used to work, people can make really good products but the roads



Sarah Malik

Photos provided by Sarah Malik

are terrible and transportation is expensive. Here, the government is investing in infrastructure, which makes it easier for businesspeople to be successful," Alia says.

Meanwhile, the sisters are busy thinking up new ways to make their business fly. "We haven't broken even yet. But consumers buy our products and they buy again and again. The next plan is to extend the business to Shanghai," she says.

Norwegian journalist discusses war, motherhood

By Chu Meng

Unlike the stereotype of a female war correspondent with short cropped hair and a man's gruff attitude, Asne Seierstad has shiny long blond hair and a warm, welcoming smile.

Sitting inside her courtyard hotel room in Nan Luoguxiang, the Norwegian reporter and best-selling author talked about her experiences in the frontline.

Seierstad is on her second visit to China to attend a local book festival. Her first visit was in 1997, when she stayed for a year as a foreign correspondent for a Scandinavian paper.

Born in 1970, Seierstad has covered wars and conflicts in Russia, Afghanistan, Iraq and The Balkans for Scandinavian newspapers and TV. But for someone who has seen the worst of human brutality, she maintains an infectious air of optimism about human nature.

She is known for telling the story behind the story: the lives of people caught in the fighting but who rarely appear on the news. She gives them a voice, allowing them to speak with their own words.

She is the author of the best-selling books *The Bookseller of Kabul*, *101 Days* and *With Their Backs to the World*, stories based in Afghanistan, Iraq and Serbia, respectively.

Seierstad, who holds a degree in Russian and philosophy from Oslo University, went to Afghanistan two weeks after

the World Trade Center terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and stayed to report the conflict from the ground.

In January 2002, she decided to live with an Afghan family to better understand the local culture and way of life. The result is *The Bookseller of Kabul* – 16 chapters about the life of an Afghan family during the Spring after the fall of the Taliban.

The novel landed on the *Guardian's* Top 50 bestsellers in 2004 and won Seierstad the title Top 100 Most Influential Women in Europe that same year. *The Bookseller* was translated into Chinese in 2009.

"Through the meeting with the family, we hear stories that would otherwise never reach the media. It takes a very long time before the Afghan people are ready to open up and tell the truth about their lives," Seierstad says. But living with the family for months won her their trust and confidence.

Besides being a portrait of life in an Afghan family, the book also gives an understanding of Afghan society that cannot be obtained through traditional journalism.

Her one-week stay in Beijing is hectic and involves lectures at various universities. "I would like to talk about war in a peaceful way to students," says the new mother. Seierstad has a 20-month-old son with her composer husband.

Now she says, she is on the hunt for a new country for her family.



Asne Seierstad

Photo provided by Asne Seierstad

St. Patrick's Day Parade happening Sunday

By Han Manman

Green-painted faces, bagpipe music, boisterous dancing ... St. Patrick's Day Parade in Chaoyang Park Sunday will be the climax of the week-long Irish Cultural Festival that runs till March 19.

St. Patrick's Day, Ireland's National Day, is being celebrated in Beijing with traditional Irish songs and dances, visual art exhibitions and sports, some presented by talents coming from Ireland.

One of the festival's main objectives is to promote Irish culture and art, said Fion Gunn, an Irish painter, sculptor and multimedia artist, who is curator of the festival's exhibition series "Irish Wave."

"The identity of Irish art is not so clear to many people. My aim is to make it clear," Gunn said, adding that traditional Irish art is characterized by strong color and rich texture.

Gunn, who has participated in

all the Irish Cultural Festivals in Beijing since 2006, said many of her Chinese friends associate Ireland with the color green and know it as a small and friendly nation.

Like other foreigners, they don't know much about the country's art and culture, Gunn said, mainly because few Irish artists have stayed and built careers in Ireland.

"In our culture, the tradition has been to emigrate. If you want to be a successful artist, you would normally leave the island. Everything went away," she said.

"Irish Wave," consisting of four exhibitions, hopes to make art more accessible to common people.

"Many people feel they can't understand art. They're afraid to go to the gallery, shy or worried that they may say the wrong thing," Gunn said. "I want to reassure people that since you've got eyes, you can look and feel. I hope when people look at artwork, they forget

they are looking at art and instead an interesting thing."

One of the exhibits, "Bread is Not Enough," features contemporary Irish painting. Its title comes from a verse in the Bible, which says people should not be anxious about maintaining their material possessions, rather they should think about nourishing their mind and spiritual and appreciating the beauty of life, Gunn said.

"There are many Irish artists who are very poor. But they are poor in one way and not poor in another because they have a rich life of culture," she said.

Gunn counts herself among the "poor Irish artists," saying that finding funding for her exhibitions is always a big challenge, but that her work gives her joy and fulfillment.

"My father used to take me to the art gallery when I was 2. At that time, I told myself while standing before a painting that I wanted

to be an artist. I clearly remember what I said even now," she said.

More details about "Irish Wave" can be found on bigsmall artists.com

St. Patrick's Day falls on March 17 this year and commemorates the death of Ireland's patron saint five centuries ago. The Irish Cultural Festival in Beijing is organized by the Embassy of Ireland and Tourism Ireland

St. Patrick's Day Parade

The parade in Chaoyang Park will begin at 1:30 pm Sunday. Many music groups will be participating, including traditional Irish musicians and dancers, harpists and a rock band. Organizers suggest participants wear green. Face painters will be on hand to help people get ready before the parade.

After the parade, there will be cultural performances in the



Fion Gunn Photo by Bai Yu

area opposite the park's East Gate. Events will include traditional Irish music and dance, poetry, drama and tourism and education promotions. There will be special activities for children. Admission to Chaoyang Park is 10 yuan.

UN calls for more gender equality in China

By Huang Daohen

New measures are needed to reduce gender inequality and enhance gender awareness, especially in rural areas, according to a UN report released in Beijing Tuesday.

While China has experienced unsurpassed economic development in recent decades, this progress has not translated into gender equality, and gender inequality still persists in the country, the report "Power, Voice and Rights" said.

With Chinese people having a strong preference for male offspring, in 2005, the ratio of newborns was 122 boys for every 100 girls – the biggest gap in the Asia Pacific region, according to the report.

"The challenge faced by China on the issue is a significant one," said Khalid Malik, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative in China. Malik also said that "there is no country in the world which is free from gender gaps."

The Asia-Pacific region faces a huge challenge in resolving gender gap, and the lack of women's participation in the workforce would cost the region billions of dollars every year, the report said.

In countries such as India, Indonesia and Malaysia, conservative estimates show that GDP would increase by up to 4 percent annually if women's employment rates were raised to 70 percent, closer to the rate of developed countries.

In China, nearly 70 percent of women are in paid work, well above the global average of 53 percent. This statistic runs parallel to the higher long-term growth and industrialization experienced by the country, the UN report said.

Mexico commemorates bicentennial with photos on its poor



Asamblea Campesina



Nino

Photos provided by Mexican Embassy



Retrato de Nino



Tina Modotti



Mujer con Bandera

By Zhao Hongyi

The Mexican Embassy unveiled a social photography exhibition Monday to celebrate the bicentennial of the country's independence and the centennial of the Mexican Revolution.

"Tina Modotti: A New Outlook," showing at the Cervantes Institute from Monday to April 18, presents the works of an Italian actress and photographer who made Mexico her adopted home.

Touched by their kindness, simplicity and sincerity, Tina Modotti took thousands of pictures capturing the daily lives of poor Mexicans. Many of her subjects were urban workers and peasant farmers who had virtually become social non-entities.

Her body of work depicts Mexico as made up of different classes and individuals, spurred by a variety of motivations: commercial, emotional, political.

"Modotti's works give us a vision of sedateness and peace we cannot find in any other place around the world," Jorg Guajardo, the Mexican ambassador, said at the exhibit's opening ceremony.

"For Modotti, photographing was not merely a way of life, but also a political commitment that afforded value as well as legitimacy to her emerging artistic visions," a written introduction to the exhibition said.

Her most popular works include *Nino* (Boy), *Mujer de*

Luto (Woman in the Weeds), *Asamblea Campesina* (Peasants' Assembly) and *Mujer con Bandera* (Woman Carrying a Flag). Modotti took most of the pictures between 1924 and 1927. She died in Mexico in 1942 at age 46.

"I'm interested in capturing moments in ordinary people's daily life," Modotti once said. "I don't care about the ideology or sentiment coming off my works. It all depends on what the audience sees in them."

"I'm not a photographer, and if you think my pictures are different from others', this is because I try to produce not art but true photographs, without any tricks or manipulation," she said.

'Non-impact' workout for a summer-ready body



Nia class at East Gate Plaza

By Liang Meilan

With summer just around the corner, many are preoccupied with how to look good in their bathing suits. The default solution for many is to hit the gym. But if you're looking for something new, try out Nia, or non-impact aerobics.

A Nia class in town meets every Tuesday and Thursday evening at East Gate Club, at the basement of East Gate Plaza. You'll see people stretching, punching, kicking and dancing freely to the music. To any onlooker, the class combines fun with well-being.

Nia, a workout for the body as well as the mind, is the most advanced fitness routine combining classic movements from yoga, modern dance, jazz, aikido, tai chi and taekwondo. It also incorporates the methods of Feldenkrais and Alexander Technique.

"Nia is special because it brings all the basic moves together – the stretching and flexibility of yoga and the power of martial

arts and taekwondo. You get all the benefits, all the movements, in one fitness workout," class instructor Debbie Van Ginkel said.

"Many traditional forms of exercises only focus on one aspect of fitness, like strength. And many focus on one part of the body, like body building. Runners are always going in the same direction, but Nia is a whole-body workout that constantly challenges you in new ways," she said.

On the mind and spirit level, Nia creates awareness of the body. "We dance barefoot so we can feel what's happening in the little bones of our feet. Nia teaches us to be aware of sensations in every movement, like feeling the neck and feeling the fingers," she said.

Nia is guided by the philosophy "follow the body's natural way," meaning each participant can work at his or her level of fitness and skill. There is no pressure to catch up with more advanced classmates, which leads to less incidence of injury or pain, Van Ginkel

said. "We don't believe in aerobics' motto 'no pain, no gain.' Nia tones and trims the body gradually through pleasure, not pain."

Rachel, one of Van Ginkel's students who has been doing Nia for two years, said she used to dread exercising. "When I was a (college) student, I knew I had to go to the gym but actually hated it ... With Nia, time goes by fast as you're exercising and sweating. It makes you feel really good afterwards," she said.

People who consider themselves inept at dancing need not fear. "Everybody can dance. There is no right or wrong way to dance," Van Ginkel said. "Nia is adaptable to every fitness level, and you don't need to be super fit or good at dancing," she said, adding that her oldest student is 79 years old and her youngest 12.

Each class takes approximately an hour, including warm-up and cool down. To read more about Nia, visit niachina.com.

Photo provided by Debbie Van Ginkel

Event

Children's Jewelry-Making Workshop

Beijing Jewelry Club is offering a handcrafted jewelry workshop that helps inspire creativity and artistic talent in children ages 6 to 12. Participants are taught how to create simple necklaces, bracelets, earrings and hair accessories.

Where: Beijing Jewelry Club, Upper East Side, 6 Dongsihuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Every Saturday starting March 13, 1-2 pm

Cost: 160 yuan per workshop

Email:

kidsworkshop@shoudesigners.com

China's Megatrends

by John Naisbitt

Garden Books is hosting a book talk for *China's Megatrends: the 8 Pillars of a New Society* the evening of March 12. Author John Naisbitt, a long-time China observer, provides a unique perspective on the changes that are reshaping China's economic, social and political systems.

Where: Garden Books, 2/F Sequoia Cafe, 44 Guanghua Lu, Chaoyang District

When: March 12, 7:15-8:30 pm

Tel: 6585 1435

Cost: 40 yuan (includes a free drink)

Positive-Caring Program for Nannies

Dulwich College Beijing is hosting a series of workshops for nannies, led by professional educators who work with young children and their parents.

Where: Dulwich College Beijing, Little Riviera Campus, 1 Xiangjiang Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

When: March 13, 9:30-11:00 am

Tel: 8450 7676 ext. 806

Cost: Free

Too Cool for School

Poets Liz Niven, Benjamin Zephaniah and Steve Connell, as well as authors Cathy Cassidy are offering a day-long celebration of literature for kids of different age groups (A: ages 8-10, B: ages 10-13 and C: ages 14+).

Where: Italian Embassy, 2 Dong'er Jie, Sanlitun, Chaoyang District

When: March 13, 10 am - 3:30 pm

Tel: 6532 2187

Cost: 80 yuan

(By Liang Meilan)

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Resumption of park boat rides postponed

By Zhang Dongya

Due to this Monday's snowfall and the lingering sub-zero temperatures, tourist boats in the city's public parks will only resume operation next week, a week later than usual.

This week, workers in parks like Shichahai in Xicheng District and Zizhuyuan in Haidian District began breaking the ice on their lakes and cleaning their boats.

Meanwhile, the lakes in parks like Taoranting in Xuanwu District and Beihai in Xicheng are still frozen solid and management has suspended ice breaking work until warmer weather.

Parks' pedal boats, rowboats and motorboats normally become available on March 8. In warmer years, this happened as early as March 4.

Before they resume operation, the boats will be inspected by the Beijing Municipal Maritime Bureau, an employee at Taoranting Park told the local *Legal Mirror*. The inspections will assess the boats' overall condition, docking capability and load-line mark, as well as the boatmen's gear, fire-fighting equipment and lifesaving device.



Parks offering boat rides starting next week

Beihai Park

Where: 1 Wenjin Jie, Xicheng District
Ticket: 40 yuan pedal boat, 50 yuan rowboat, 60-80 yuan battery-operated boat
Tel: 6403 7972

Chaoyang Park

Where: 1 Nongzhanguan Nan Lu, Chaoyang District
Ticket: 30-50 yuan rowboat, 40-100 yuan pedal boat, 50-100 yuan battery-operated boat
Tel: 5606 5409

Shichahai Park

Where: Jia 23, Yangfang Hutong, Denei Dajie, Xicheng District
Ticket: 40-80 yuan pedal boat, 60-180 yuan battery-operated boat, 2,000 yuan painted luxury motorboat
Tel: 6612 7652

Taoranting Park

Where: 19 Taiping Jie, Xuanwu District
Ticket: 40 yuan pedal boat, 50 yuan battery-operated boat
Tel: 6353 2385

Zizhuyuan Park

Where: 35 Baishiqiao Lu, Haidian District
Ticket: 40-60 yuan pedal boat, 50-120 yuan battery-operated boat
Tel: 6842 0055



People flock to Beihai Park in spring and summer to go boat riding. CFP Photos

ASK Beijing Today

Email your questions to: weiyiing@ynet.com

I want to go and see Disney's 3D version of *Alice in Wonderland*. Do you know if it will be shown in Beijing? Which do you think is the best place to see it?

The movie has already been passed and is scheduled to be screened at major cinemas in town on March 26. The film will be shown in three versions: 2D, 3D and IMAX 3D. The Palace Cinema, Xindong'an Cinema and Broadway Cinematheque have highly recommended 3D theaters.

Is it possible to bring a dog on the train from Beijing to Guangzhou, and how can it be done?

It won't be a problem bringing your dog on the train, but pets are restricted to the cargo hold; they're not allowed to enter the passenger cabins with their owner.

A day or two before departure, apply for a health certificate for your dog at a veterinary clinic authorized by the Railway Department.

On the day of departure, put your dog in a comfortable but sturdy cage with sufficient food, and bring it to the railway station's Consignment Station.

For more information, get in touch with the Railway Veterinary Station (Tel. 5184 0893) and the Consignment Station (Tel. 5182 4244).

Can you recommend a store that sells reasonably priced digital keyboards, preferably Yamahas?

Try visiting Xinaiqin Musical Instruments Store, one of the city's top piano stores. It sells a wide variety of brands, including Yamaha, Casio and Kawai, and also supplies second-hand pianos. The products there are known to be fairly priced.

You can find it at 4/F Chaoyang Commercial Building (Chaoyang Shangye Dasha), 34 Xibahe Zhong Li, Chaoyang District, Tel. 8401 0567. You can also check out its website, ganganwang.com.

I'm always in Xidan's commercial area and want to find a nail salon where I can relax. Can you also give me an idea of the price?

Try I Nail at the basement of Joy City shopping mall. It has a cozy environment and its manicurists are professionally trained. The salon is licensed, so you don't have to worry about sanitation. The price varies depending on the treatment you get, but expect to pay an average of 200 yuan. Call the salon at 5971 6007 for more information. You can find better quality nail salons in Sanlitun area, like the first and fourth floor of Yashow market or basement of the Sanlitun Village.

(By Liang Meilan)

Municipal government improves bike rental service

By Annie Wei

Beijing's bike rental service received a lot of praise for promoting green living in the lead-up to the Olympic Games. Two years down the road, however, the plan has hit a number of bumps.

The service has been plagued with complaints, such as its exorbitant rental deposit of 400 yuan and lack of rental outlets, which has led to a difficulty in returning borrowed bikes.

To solve these problems, the municipal government has decided to add 500 rental outlets and 20,000 bikes by the end of 2012.

In a related development, three bike outlets offering free rental began their trial operation last week. To use the service, people first need to apply for a credit IC card at their neighborhood community center, or *juweihui*, by presenting a valid identification card.

At rental outlets, the IC card is exchanged



The free bike rental outlet at Dongsi station on Subway Line 5 CFP Photo

for a key to a bike. A person gets his or her card back once the bike is returned.

The IC card also keeps track of a per-

son's bike "mileage," which will be deducted if the bike is returned an hour late. Too many mileage deductions will disqualify a person from using the free bike rental service in the future.

According to a community center in Chaoyangmen, the credit IC cards are only distributed in residential communities. "The cards are going very quickly among residents," a staff member said.

The free bike rental outlets are open 24 hours.

Free bike rental locations

- Southeast exit of Dongsi station on Subway Line 5
- Along Chaoyangmen Nei Dajie, near Chaoyangmen station of Subway Line 2
- Dafangjia Hutongpu (on Chaoyangmen Nei Xiaojie), near Chaoyangmen station of Subway Line 2

Drifting in cinema

Promising cinematographer brings art to Chinese film

By He Jianwei

"You'd better get famous early, because happiness won't be so great if it comes too late," prominent Chinese writer Eileen Chang wrote in her 20s in the 1940s.

Her words have influenced generations of Chinese writers.

Rain Li, a 27-year-old cinematographer, is one example.

Li left China for England at age 15 and started working in film at 18. Eight years later, she won the Best Cinematography award from the Boston Film Critics.

International fame has brought her happiness, but she knows too well the bitterness and suffering one experiences on the way up.

"No matter whether it is in London, Paris, New York or Beijing, I'm always a newcomer to the city. I have drifted around the world for so many years with two cases, and maybe that is what my life looks like," Li says.

With high cheekbones and single-fold eyelids, Li looks more like a model than a cinematographer at her first exhibition in China at J & F Mansion West in Honglingjin Park, Chaoyang District.

Last Sunday, she screened seven short films including her collaboration with top fashion designers such as Britain's Dame Vivienne Westwood, Japan's Yohji Yamamoto and Belgium's Dries van Noten.

Li's relationship with fashion began at 15. Unlike her classmates in middle schools, she studied abroad at an early age: it was the only way her parents could deal with her.

Born and raised in Zhengzhou, Henan Province, Li fell out with her family and became a rock drummer. "I never had any skirts until I was 19 and my hair has never been black since I became a teenager," she says.

She went to England to study the language, but after a few months of training she was tapped to be a model while on the street.

She modeled part-time for a few months, but quickly quit. "I'm impatient and I don't like waiting and waiting. As a model, you must wait for making up, dressing and photos," she says.

But that part-time work helped her find her real passion: lighting.

To learn more about lighting, Li asked the fashion shoots' lighting engineer whether she could work as his unpaid assistant. "They took pictures in a public park and I stayed there for a whole day," she says.

She had no foundation in the subject, but was persuaded to apply to the Bournemouth Film School where she studied cinematography.

She spent two years training as a lighting electrician in making short films, commercials and feature films, which led her to working as a camera assistant and later a cinematographer.

But recognition was an uphill battle in the male-dominated field: in the world of film behind the camera, youth and beauty

are an obstacle.

In England, film is the domain of the privileged upper class. She was driven out of film school and opted instead for a two-month visit to Canada, where she enrolled in the School of Image Arts at Ryerson University in Toronto.

Her first cinematography gig came when she was 19: a 13-minute short called *Return*. It was such a young age that few believed she could be a competent filmmaker.

When she walked into the studio, most people mistook her for an actress and pushed her out to the makeup trailer. "Every one of them said pretty much the same thing, 'You're too young. You'd be better off hanging out in a bar and getting chatted up,'" she says.

Li answered with her work.

After showing the film, an American agent who saw her work invited her to make commercials and music videos. "The film world is so small. I got many projects from this agency," she says.

Three years later, she was tired of shooting commercials and music videos. "It is easy to make money if you take commercial projects and music videos. But I found I was empty," she says.

At a critical moment, she met the renowned cinematographer and director Christopher Doyle who opened a new door for her.

Born in Sydney, Australia, Doyle is one of the best cinematographers known for his use of extreme angles and vanguard color grading. He has worked with many Chinese directors, like Wong

Kar-wai, Zhang Yimou, Edward Yang and Zhang Yuan.

When Li was 21, she made a music video in a studio in London while Doyle was working on a project in the same studio. "When I first saw her, I saw what I should be," Doyle recalled their first encounter.

The way Li tells it, Doyle was drunk and asked her how a young cinematographer could support herself.

Then they continued their own projects in different countries. A month later, Doyle invited Li to shoot for a Dries van Noten runway show, although Doyle had never seen a single reel of her work. "We didn't leave telephone numbers after our first meeting: I got the news from my agency," Li says.

Doyle could not take the camera for the project because he was committed to M. Night Shyamalan's *Lady in the Water*, so they collaborated by phone.

Since their first collaboration, they have finished 12 projects, including Gus van Sant's film *Paranoid Park*, which won a Special Prize at the 60th International Cannes Film Festival in 2007.

Combining 35 millimeter and grainy Super 8 skateboarding footage, the film

was a dream project for Li and Doyle, who were given free rein by the director.

The script was only 25 pages, and many of the actors were skateboarders. "They were not professional actors and we didn't have time to rehearse. Most of the scenes only had two takes," Li says.

"Chris and I literally made up the look of the film as we went along. The very first day of shooting we decided to play around and just close our eyes and pull out a lens from the lens box, stick it on the camera and see what happened."

Li and Doyle's latest collaboration was in Doyle's film *Warsaw Dark*. "It's difficult to work with a director who is such a good cinematographer. They can't help themselves from telling you exactly what they want," Li says.

But she could deal with their disputes. She received plenty of technical training in England and Canada, and Doyle was a self-taught cinematographer.

Doyle admits that in many ways, he is more Chinese than Li is and she is more English than he could ever be.

This year, a domestic investor invited them to make a full-length Chinese film.

"If I am going to direct and write a full-length film, I hope my first film will be a Chinese one," Li says.

The new film is about life as a drifter and the search for dreams in big cities. Li has been a drifter since she was 15. "There are many young people just like me leaving their hometowns and pursuing their dreams in big cities, both in China and other countries," she says.

Li is confident that what she learnt in the West will be a refreshing breeze for Chinese cinema.

"Every one of them said pretty much the same thing, 'You're too young. You'd be better off hanging out in a bar and getting chatted up.'"

"It's difficult to work with a director who is such a good cinematographer. They can't help themselves from telling you exactly what they want."



Rock star Cui Jian (left) and renowned cinematographer Christopher Doyle cheered Rain Li's first exhibition in Beijing last Saturday.



Rain Li (second from right) attended the 60th International Cannes Film Festival with the crew of Paranoid Park in 2007.

CFP Photos

Rain Li's fashion film

Black humor master's early fiction collected

By Charles Zhu

It has been almost three years since Kurt Vonnegut Jr. died and *Look at the Birdie*, a collection of 14 unpublished short stories he wrote early in his career, has been published to comfort fans who have been pained by the loss of a great American writer.

Unlike many posthumous collections, instead of being scraped from the bottom of a barrel, it stands as a work of art and fits in perfectly with his other two collections of short stories: *Welcome to Monkey House* and *Bagombo Snuff Box*.

It is unclear why these stories went unpublished. They are all simple and straightforward with a surprise neat ending. The language is polished and refined, perfectly in Vonnegut's style.

One of the collection's stories, "Confido," begins beautifully with his most lyrical line: "The Summer had died peacefully in its sleep, and Autumn, as soft-spoken executrix, was locking life up safely until Spring came to claim it." The story delineates – in its brand name black humor – an American mother of two and her husband and a lab assistant who dreams of inventing something that will change the world and the family's fortunes. He works out a device that will serve his ends, an earpiece that whispers highly personal suggestions in the ear of its owner. The invention makes one instantly addicted. The author's message is: Is it good for mankind? Will it make life better on earth or simply make its inventor a fortune while getting mankind to doom?

In "Ed Luby's Key Club," a married couple, Harve and Claire Elliot, come to a nightclub to celebrate their 14th wedding anniversary. They're refused entry because it is an exclusive members-only club, with an actual golden key required to open the door. To the surprise of the



Look at the Birdie
By Kurt Vonnegut, 251pp, Delacorte Press, \$27

reader, through a series of unexpected twists, Harve and Claire are thrown into prison on account of murder. It turns out that Ed Luby, the owner of the nightclub, has the town and its cops and judge entirely at his disposal. The story is packed with action and there is a high-speed escape and, finally, justice.

In "King and Queen of the Universe," an affluent young couple, Henry Davidson Merrill and Anne Lawson Heiler, dress up and take a walk in the city park at night. A desperate and poorly clothed man, Stanley Karpinsky, dashes out from the shadows. The couple is terrified, thinking there may be an imminent attack. But the

man is not a robber. He only wants to have them to see his dying mother. "She'd think you were the two most beautiful creatures she ever laid eyes on," the man says.

The lady emigrated from Poland and sacrificed everything to finance Stanley's college and graduate education. Now she's dying, and her son has no achievement whatsoever to speak of. He wants Henry and Anne to come to his apartment and tell his mother he's invented a wonderful device that will change the world. The couple agrees.

The mother is "speechless and radiant" at the sight of these well-dressed nice, rich people praising the work of her son. She's going to die, satisfied that all her sacrifices had been worthwhile – then "the cops broke in."

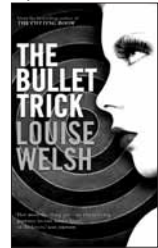
Henry and Anne have to face issues arising from differences between the affluent and the working class and between the carefree and the world-weary. "Three days later," Vonnegut writes, "Henry told Anne he loved her. Anne told him she loved him, too. They had told each other that before, but this was the first time it had meant a little something. They had finally seen a little something of life."

The optimistic and simple tones inherent in these short stories and the author's conviction in human goodness are extraordinary when we consider that Vonnegut had endured the suicide of his mother when he was 21 years old and it was about the time when he wrote these stories.

All the 14 short stories in this collection carry the classic traces Vonnegut later developed as a master storyteller. He dwelled on good and evil, and the good guys are always young and virtuous men and women of humble means and kind hearts who find a way to succeed each time, by doing what their mind tells them to.

Bookworm book listing

Vivian Wang from the Bookworm recommends the following bestsellers to Beijing Today readers.



The Bullet Trick

By Louise Welsh, 384pp, Canongate, \$13.00

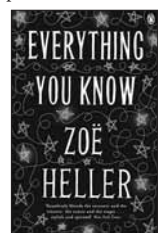
William Wilson is a foundering so-called mentalist, conjurer and above all – despite frequently being the opening act for strippers – a master performer. When his agent books him for a string of cabaret gigs in Berlin, he hopes his luck is changing. Among the showgirls of Berlin's scandalous underground, Wilson can forget his lonely heart, his muddled head, and, more important, his past. But secrets have a habit of catching up with William and as he gets in over his head with a certain brand of lucrative after-hours work, the line between act and reality blurs.



The Book of Intimate Grammar

By David Grossman, 352pp, Picador, \$15.00

Aaron Kellinfeld is the ringleader of the boys in his Jerusalem neighborhood, but as his 12-year-old friends begin to mature, Kellinfeld remains imprisoned in the body of a child for three long years. While Israel inches toward the Six-Day War and his friends cross the boundary between childhood and adolescence, Kellinfeld remains trapped as a child, spying on the changes that adulthood wreaks as, like his hero Houdini, he struggles to escape the trap of growing up.



Everything You Know

By Zoe Heller, 224pp, Washington Square Press, \$20.00

Willy Muller is an embittered writer of celebrity bios and an equal-opportunity misanthrope. At 50, he has survived imprisonment for murdering his wife, years of venomous hate mail from the British public and, most recently, the suicide of his daughter Sadie. Muller needs a break, but he is not going to get it. While recuperating from a heart attack in a Mexican resort with his magnificently silly girlfriend Penny and his vodka-drenched friend Harry, Muller finds himself drawn into a troubling confrontation with the past.

(By He Jianwei)

Permanent memory of a temporary home

By He Jianwei

Last month, a Taiwanese director and producer collaborated to put a play on Beijing's stage telling the story of the military villages built 60 years ago for fleeing Kuomintang soldiers and their families.

The TV producer Wang Wei-chuang, who was born and grew up in one of such villages in Chiayi County, created the play with playwright and director Stan Lai.

As the buildings in the villages are demolished, the generation born and raised in the villages is trying creative ways to preserve its collective memory.

Since 2008, the island's artists have been creating TV dramas and documentaries about the history of the villages.

Taiwan scholar Shaun Chang edited a collection of memoirs written by 15 celebrities who were born and grew up in the simple and crude buildings. Her *A Glimpse of Taiwan Military Village* provides an insight into the lives of their generation.

The book was released last month and quickly became a mainland supplement to Wang's play.

The 15 subjects are from different fields: writer, producer, director and sociologist. Their eyes are like 15 cameras giving readers a view of the villages from

different angles – their founding, literature, love stories, foods and dialects.

The village is a historical and cultural product. It is not only a community or land for the generation, but also life itself. "It was like the 'mother's womb' to me and was a nourishing ingredient in my life," Wang said at the book's release last month.

The generation who grew up in the villages is today's leaders, entertainers, educators, writers and businesspeople. Through the book, readers can find common ground among those people. Nostalgic and the search for identity are major topics for writers who grew up in the villages.

The island's population is made up of four major groups: native-born people who speak Minnan dialect, Hakka people, aboriginal ethnic groups like the Gapsan and people who came from the mainland in 1949.

The book reveals the process of racial integration in Taiwan and provides information to understand its current culture. The villages were like the fences that separated the world between native-born Taiwanese and newcomers in the early times, but the cultures mingled in marriage.



A Glimpse of Taiwan Military Village

Edited by Shaun Chang, 213pp, China Renmin University Press, 38 yuan

By Wang Yu

The temperature may be back down to zero, but when has frostbite ever stood in the way of fashion? Stylish people are dropping their heavy coats for glittering new collections.

This week, we focus on office attire that also works for your friend's dinner party or a night on the town. In the big city, time to change clothes after work is a luxury, so outfits that can adapt are essential. Fashion editors and smart dressers have a few tips that can work on any budget.

Spring style tips

Switch from office life to night life



The Olsen sisters sporting the bunny ears.



Women's style

Clothes

When Cindy Huang, a PR manager, has plans for Friday night, she chooses a vintage silk corselet she found at a second-hand store with a slim black jacket. Her skinny pants may be alone in the office, but they are standard at parties.

"It all depends on your events that night. If there is a party at the club, I think a skirt is the best way to balance your different styles from daytime to midnight," Huang says.

The trend of underwear as outfits is back thanks to last year's fashion icon Lady Gaga. Last November, the singer turned heads with her daring attire at the 13th Annual Accessories Council Excellence (ACE) Awards in New York City: she wore a lace face covering and a Madonna-inspired underwear-as-outerwear look.

Ten years ago, Jean-Paul Gaultier produced sculptured costumes for Madonna, including the infamous cone-bra for her Blond Ambition Tour and designed the wardrobe for her Confessions Tour in 2006, as well.

At the New York ceremony, Lady Gaga sported her typical look with a hair bow, hat, sunglasses, gloves and even a couture neck brace – "well-appointed in accessories," ACE President

Karen Giberson said in a statement after the event.

"But just remember, you are not Lady Gaga. The right underwear must not be a bra, of course," says Twigg Song, fashion editor of hcosmo.com, *Cosmopolitan's* Chinese site. Cindy is smart shopping in vintage stores, because old bohemian clothes make her look outstanding but not overly sexy. Brands like D&G and high street labels like Topshop are including



Fendi's new Perspex clutch. Photos provided by Fendi

outfit-underwear in their new collections, which can help you save money.

Shoes

"High heels are essential. Sports shoes are for junior high students unless they are Converse – those fit the rock 'n' roll look when combined with skinny pants," says Niki Zhang, a 26-year-old marketing manager. As a long-time music fan, her look is inspired by '60s classic rock, Mod and the garage scene.

But not every one can be a rocker. You will look stupid in a slim-cut leather jacket if you don't get the music. The style involves too many exquisite details for daily work – besides, it would be a shame to hide it all under a suit.

"Platform shoes are the best. You can be 10 centimeters taller when wearing them. Since the entire shoe is elevated, it's not tiring and bad for your feet like high heels. When the weather gets warmer, you might want to switch to platforms with lace that make for a more womanly look. Valentino's lace court shoes are a good choice," Song says.

Accessories

Ever since the first bunny-eared model stepped onto a Louis Vuitton Fall catwalk, and after Madonna wore them at the MET Gala, everyone has been wondering: why bunny ears?

Marc Jacobs has finally explained himself. He said a girl who works on his design

team and Adrian, one of the boys, were tying some shapes of fabric that reminded him of a bunny. The designer was imitating the style of can-can dancers, and the fabric inspired him. Bunny ears give everything a kind of Playboy or French coquette element.

Bunny ears are not the only wild accessory. Leaves, woolen balls or red lipstick can help you make a quick change from office lady to party animal.

Other accessories are just born to be big. Many designers are embracing the big-is-beautiful mentality. From sunglasses to metallic brushed bangles, the bigger the better. A variety of colors are needed to mark a lady's taste in art.

Bags

Alexander McQueen was a genius: his leather Union Jack clutch is now a trophy accessory. With a signature silver-tone skull closure and crystal and glass pearl embellishments, it was born to be the perfect bag for the dance floor.

"Such small bags can be hidden in your daily-use bag. When the sun goes down, move your mobile phone, credit card and compact to the smaller bag and head out for fun. If you can't afford it, brands like H&M and Zara offer cheaper, similar products," Song says.



Men's style

Clothes

Chris Jing, a sound engineer, looks for new shirts in second-hand stores and boutiques. Patterns in light colors go well with his black suits. With a grey waistcoat, it is a modern-classic gentleman's look.

"Plump pants are only for rappers. I think slim-cut jeans are OK. Usually I wear a small-sized bike leather jacket at night. For guys, it's easier to keep a balance between a work suit and party look," he says.

"The recent movie, Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes*, has wonderful costume designs which guys can learn from," Song says. Holmesian looks have been popping up on runways. Sherlockly elements include tweeds, vests, capes, hats and pocketwatches – everything short of magnifying glasses. Certainly, Robert Downey Jr. and Jude Law made



The Holmesian look.

the British suits look even better.

Tweed jackets can be found from a lot of British brands such as Harris Tweed. In Beijing, second-hand stores are the best place to get them.

Shoes

"Oxford or brogue shoes match the Holmes look perfectly," Song says. Boots in those styles work at both the office and the nightclub. Brands like Heutchy and Church are reliable but hard to come by in China. Online stores selling hand-

made shoes are a great way to save money and show off your style.

Accessories

A pocketwatch may seem Victorian, but to seal the look you are better off with ties and cravats. "You can also choose to wear a silk kerchief under your shirt. It makes people look classic modern and gentle. Be courageous to try colors like red, r green. Though men don't have to be as naughty as the British singer Mika, accessories with bright colors show taste and creativity," Song says.

Photos provided by H&M

Lomography comes to Beijing

By Annie Wei

The opening of two Lomography stores in town spreads to the capital an experimental photography style started in the early 1990s by two students in Vienna who discovered the wonders of the small, Russia-made Lomo Kompakt Automat camera.

Long after they have browsed the camera displays, visitors to both stores stay to look at the LomoWall: unorthodox snapshots taken by Lomographers all around the world.

The Sanlitun store's manager Liu Qiang recommends the following models to those who want to try their hand at Lomo.



LOMO LC-A+ Anniversary, 2,525 yuan

An updated version of the original 1984 Lomography camera, this model packs a Russian Minitar 1 lens for wide-angle images and auto exposure during daytime. This limited-edition silver anniversary memorabilia features a textured surface, a Lomo anniversary logo on the body and a commemorative wooden box stamped "25 years."



Diana f+ Qing Hua, 820 yuan

This is the choice for photographers who prefer to work with film. The pictures come out with a soft, dreamy look, which give a deeper dimension to ordinary photographs. The model comes in an elegant, china design and uses 120 film.

Fisheye 2 Pink, 585 yuan

This pink device with a shiny metal surface that doubles as a mirror is definitely eye catching. It has a 180-degree view, a spherical fish-eye viewfinder that can capture images as close as a centimeter and options for long exposure or multiple exposures. The removable viewfinder, when unattached, reveals a hot shoe on which to attach the flash.



Photos provided by Lomography.cn

Lomography Gallery Store Sanlitun

Where: Room 101, Door 2, Block 30, Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District
Open: 11 am - 8 pm
Tel: 6416 1868

Lomography Gallery Store Longtougjing

Where: 9 Longtougjing Jie, Xicheng District
Open: 11 am - 8 pm
Tel: 6657 2769
Web: lomography.cn



428 yuan

Practical yet stylish totes

By Annie Wei

Looking for a light-weight handbag that can carry your mineral water bottle, a pair of heels for that after-work party and your ever-present journal - but in a design that still screams "fashionable?" Check out the latest collection of a&i bags: dazzling colors that are making a comeback this spring and summer.

The Hong Kong brand, which stands for "attention" and "ideas," takes pride in simple yet trendy designs. Models like Pepe function as both a belt bag and a cosmetic kit.

a&i's unique feature is safety belts. The brand also promises products that are wear-resistant and waterproof, so you don't have to worry about taking them to the pool or a beach party.

a&i has a series for women, men, children, business and sports, with individual styles ranging from 98 to 800 yuan.

a&i

Where: B1, Raffles shopping mall, Dongzhimen Nei Dajie, Dongcheng District

Open: 10 am - 9 pm

Tel: 5807 4889

Web: ai-allidea.com



458 yuan



Bijou Bec lip balm,
119 yuan

Photos provided by Glamourflage.com

Glamorous, fun skin care

By Annie Wei

People who have grown weary - and wary - of over-advertised skin care products should check out Glamourflage.

The Australian-made brand, which says it does not test on animals, offers luxurious yet affordable products. For the daily care of sensitive skin, especially in the dry Beijing weather, we vote for Luscious Lucy Face Cream (260 yuan).

Infused with moisturizers including shea butter, palm oil, coconut oil and aloe vera, the cream moisturizes, conditions and smoothens the skin.

Glamourflage's concoctions come in packages that bear fun and sexy female images, reminiscent of 1940 and 50s bombshells.

Another antidote to the drying wind is Bijou Bec lip balm (119 yuan), which contains vitamin E and natural moisturizers like beeswax. The cranberry-flavored balm is definitely yummy.

We also like Jaunty Jess Soap Sensation (160 yuan) with natural oils and shea butter. It does not contain any detergent, ideal for people who are allergic to ordinary soap.

Glamourflage

Where: Inside Sasa cosmetics bar, B1, Yin-Tai Center, 2 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District

Open: 10 am - 10 pm

Tel: 6566 6060



Luscious Lucy
Face Cream,
260 yuan



498 yuan

Photos provided by a&i

Hidden treasures

By Annie Wei

There is no promotion more flattering to a restaurant or bar than customers' word of mouth. This week we review two "hidden" gems discovered by our readers.

Hot pot southern style

Although located right behind The Bookworm book shop and restaurant and around the corner from the popular bar D-lounge, Fuhao Fangtang is neither on Google Maps or dianping.com, a national restaurant-review site. One reason may be that the restaurant does not have an identifying sign outside the building.

Fuhao specializes in hot pot broth popular in the south, especially in Guangdong Province and Hong Kong.

Its manager Wang Ke recommends special sea snail broth (28 yuan for a small pot, 58 for a big pot), made using sea snail and sanhuang chicken – chicken with yellow feathers and tender meat. We like that the soup comes out rich, but not oily.

Other specialty broths are fresh chicken with yellow Chinese wine (18/38 yuan), healthy soup with Chinese herbal essence (68/158 yuan) and tomato and beef-bone broth (15/38 yuan).

Cao Jie, the restaurant's chef who hails from Shandong Province, says the healthy soup with Chinese herbal essence uses many ingredients considered "nourishing" in Traditional Chinese Medicine: turtle meat, black chicken and chicken kidney. These are popular tonics in Guangdong and are part of the locals' daily diet.

Each broth takes eight to 13 hours to prepare, but Fuhao makes them fresh every day. Many southerners who grew up on China's "soup tradition" say that dining at Fuhao makes their day!

But broth does not a hot pot make. We suggest diners try throwing in beef balls with cheese (58 yuan), shrimp balls with goose liver (68 yuan) and cuttlefish with crab (68 yuan). The different textures make for a more enjoyable meal.

The restaurant also serves Hong Kong-style fried dishes, like curry beef (58 yuan) – deep-fried beef served with a bowl of curry sauce and baked bread.

Diners who are not restricted by their budget can try the Cantonese-style seafood dishes like fresh sea snail (98 yuan), fresh clam in sake (58 yuan) and Japanese sea cucumber (388 yuan).

Fuhao Fantang

Where: 4 Sanlitun Nan Lu, Chaoyang District

Open: 9 am – midnight (winter), 9 am – 4 am next day (summer)

Tel: 6586 4488

Meat balls in four flavors, 68 yuan

Photos by Huang Xiao

Tribute to the Song Dynasty

Moyu'er, tucked in an unnamed hutong along Ping'an Avenue, whips up dishes based on recipes that date back to the Song Dynasty (960-1279).

Its owner Wang Xiaobo is passionate about all things Song, which he describes as "the most splendid period in Chinese culture" in terms of literature, theater and food.

Wang and his team of cooks not only come up with different specialties every season, they also update their menu monthly. They have been doing this tirelessly since Moyu'er was established two years ago.

Diners can only pick from set meals priced 100, 200 and 300 yuan per person.

This month, the following are the choice of appetizers: pickled radish in aged vinegar, beef seasoned with soy bean and mushroom and mango with chili sauce.

For mains, try boluo xiasongqian, minced pineapple and prawn wrapped in lettuce. The fresh lettuce and crispy fillings make a good combination.

There is also sansecai, or "three-color dish," a mixture of steamed salted fish, green vegetables and tomato. The original recipe calls for persimmon instead of tomato, but the fruit is not available year-round hence the substitution.

As much as Wang would like to

stay faithful to Song practices – tomatoes and peppers were not introduced to China until the middle of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) – practicality and customer preference sometimes trumps ancient tradition.

Many customers are impressed with the preparation of chaoshidan, fried re-mixed egg with sliced monkey-head mushroom. The egg yolk and white are combined with the other ingredients, then the mixture is put back inside the egg shell, boiled and lastly, fried. The egg comes out greenish.

Deep-fried bitter melon, also called yubanzi or "jade ring worn on a man's thumb," is fried with egg instead of the usual flour to preserve the bitter melon's green color.

Lotus root stuffed with sticky rice and covered by sweet osmanthus sauce is a popular local dish. Moyu'er's version involves steaming the lotus roots together with the osmanthus sauce to create a richer flavor.

Diners who love home-style dishes should try stewed red bean, sliced tofu and pork spine soup.

We recommend calling ahead of time to book a table.

Moyu'er

Where: 8 Zhongjianzi Xiang, Dongcheng District

Open: 11 am – late

Tel: 6403 3309



Photos by Yu Tingmei

1. Steamed salted fish, green vegetables and tomato 2. Fried re-mixed egg with sliced monkey-head mushroom 3. Deep-fried bitter melon



Curry beef, 58 yuan

TNT's Macbeth coming to Beijing

By He Jianwei

Four months after staging *Romeo and Juliet* at the National Center for the Performing Arts, Britain's TNT Theater is back in town with the Beijing premiere of another Shakespeare masterpiece, *Macbeth*.

The dark drama, coming to Nine Theater on March 19, was the company's first Shakespeare production, presented in 2000. Since then, TNT has performed *Macbeth* more than a thousand times in 30 countries, making it the most internationally performed Shakespeare play in the last decade.

TNT's version is notable for its very physical style, integrated musical score and dynamic interpretation, which focuses on supernatural elements, specifically witches.

"This is a full-blooded production that's not afraid to unleash the power of Shakespeare's darkest and most exciting tragedy. The witches are identified as the source of the dramatic energy of the play. They are wild forest spirits and they are neither man nor woman. They inhabit the entire

world of the play," its director Paul Stebbings said.

Macbeth is a warrior, but whose bravery is corrupted by thoughtless ambition. His wife Lady Macbeth is also a type of witch – one who calls on the spirits to unsex her, but who becomes possessed and destroyed by the demons she thought to command.

Although the play revolves around gore and madness, it also has some light-hearted moments: the Porter scene features a funny acrobatic dance.

The production is woven through with intense music composed by Paul Flush. "Shakespeare's work must have music, which is usually ignored by creators in our times. We play accordion and saxophone on stage," Stebbings said. "It's quite common to play and sing live in a movie, but it's rarely seen in a play."

The play has received acclaim from the media and audiences worldwide. Britain's *Observer* described it "a devastating performance." The *Japan Times* said, "From the moment



the curtains open the audience is gripped, the production slowly builds into a crescendo of terror. With its strong visual and aural images, this *Macbeth* is a haunting reminder of how accessible Shakespeare can still be to modern audiences."

TNT's Macbeth

Where: Nine Theater, Chaoyang Culture Center, 17 Jintai Li, Chaoyang District

When: March 19-20, 7:30 pm
Admission: 120-380 yuan, 60 yuan for students
Tel: 6551 6930, 6551 6906

Upcoming

Nightlife

Michael Shiefel Jazz Night
Where: Yugongyishan, 3-2 Zhangzizhong Lu, Dongcheng District
When: March 15, 9 pm
Admission: 30 yuan
Tel: 6404 2711

Stage in April

Concert

Francesco Piemontesi Piano Recital

Where: Forbidden City Concert Hall (inside Zhongshan Park), 18 Zhaodengyu Lu, Xicheng District
When: April 4, 7:30 pm
Admission: 90-380 yuan
Tel: 6417 7845

David Braid Jazz Piano Recital

Where: Peking University Hall, 5 Yiheyuan Lu, Haidian District
When: April 10, 7 pm
Admission: 100-280 yuan
Tel: 6275 8452

Dance

Pharaoh's Daughter – Bolshoi Theater China Tour

Where: Opera House of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District
When: April 30 – May 2, 7:30 pm
Admission: 280-1,280 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

Drama

21 Carat

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District
When: April 13-18, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-680 yuan
Tel: 6551 8058

TNT's Macbeth

Where: Peking University Hall, 5 Yiheyuan Lu, Haidian District
When: April 23-25, 7 pm
Admission: 100-200 yuan
Tel: 6275 8452

Design for Living
Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District
When: April 29 – May 3, 7:30 pm
Admission: 100-880 yuan
Tel: 6551 8058

Musical

I Have a Date With Spring

Where: Poly Theater, 14 Dongzhimen Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District
When: April 7-11, 7:30 pm
Admission: 180-580 yuan
Tel: 6551 8058

Opera

Tchaikovsky's Eugene Onegin

Where: Opera House of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District
When: April 24-27, 7:30 pm
Admission: 280-1,280 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

(By He Jianwei)

5 Friday, March 12

Exhibition

King of Chaos – Li Quanshan Solo Exhibition

Where: Dong Gallery, 798 Art District, 4 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District
When: Until April 3, daily except Monday, 10 am – 5 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 5978 9418

Movie

Pauline at the Beach (1986)

Where: China Film Archive, 3 Wenhuiyuan Lu, Xiaoxitian, Haidian District
When: 1 pm
Admission: 30 yuan
Tel: 8229 6153

Short Sharp Shock (1998)

Where: Broadway Cinematheque, 2/F Building 4, North section of the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), 1 Xiangheyuan Lu, Dongcheng District
When: 7:30 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 8438 8258 ext. 8008

Nightlife



St. Vincent

Where: Yugongyishan, 3-2 Zhangzizhong Lu, Dongcheng District

When: 9 pm
Admission: 120 yuan
Tel: 6404 2711

Arbor Day Party Celebrating Trees

Where: Weibozhiyan Club, Room 2308, 3/F North Building, SOHO Shangdu, 8 Dongdaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District
When: 9 pm
Admission: 50 yuan
Tel: 5900 0969

6 Saturday, March 13

Exhibition

Bad Girl Cure – Songyang Art

Where: Gallery TN, 798 Art District, 2 Jiuxianqiao Lu, Chaoyang District

When: Until April 10, daily except Monday and Tuesday, 10 am – 6 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 5978 9550

Jungle – A Close-up Focus on Chinese Contemporary Art Trends

Where: Platform China Contemporary Art Institute, 319-1 East End Art Zone A, Caoshangdi Village, Chaoyang District
When: Until May 16, daily except Monday, 11 am – 6 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6432 0091

Movie

Hear Me (2009)

Where: Lady Book Saloon, 69 Chengfu Lu, Haidian District
When: 7 pm

Admission: Free
Tel: 6270 1928

The Legend of Tianyun Mountain (1981)

Where: Broadway Cinematheque, 2/F Building 4, North section of the Museum of Modern Art (MOMA), 1 Xiangheyuan Lu, Dongcheng District
When: 2 pm
Admission: 20 yuan, 15 yuan for students
Tel: 8438 8258 ext. 8008

Nightlife

The American String Quartet

Where: Music Hall of the National Center for the Performing Arts, 2 Xi Chang'an Jie, Xicheng District
When: 7:30 pm
Admission: 80-400 yuan
Tel: 6655 0000

We Play House – Vincenzo

Where: Lantern, B1, 3-3 Mall, 33 Sanlitun Lu, Chaoyang District
When: 9 pm
Admission: 50 yuan
Tel: 13810347555

7 Sunday, March 14

Exhibition

Spread

Where: Shang-hART Gallery, 261 Caochangdi Village, Chaoyang District
When: Until April 11, daily except Monday, 11 am – 6 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6432 3202



Nightlife



Zhong Tongxi – Indie Rock

Where: D-22, 242 Chengfu Lu, Haidian District
When: 9 pm
Admission: 50 yuan, 40 yuan for students
Tel: 6265 3177

Jazz Guitarists – Niklas Winter and Teemu Viimikainen

Where: Jianghu Bar, 7 Dongmianhua Hutong, Jiaod-

aokou Nan Dajie, Dongcheng District

When: 9:30 pm
Admission: 30 yuan advance purchase, 40 yuan at the door
Tel: 6401 4611

Movie

Refractaire (Draft Dodgers, 2009)

Where: Canadian International School of Beijing, 38 Liangmaqiao Lu, Chaoyang District
When: 8 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6465 7788

Monkeys in Winter (2006)

Where: French Cultural

Center, 1/F, Guangcai International Mansion, 18 Gongti Xilu, Chaoyang District
When: 7:30 pm
Admission: Free
Tel: 6553 2627



By Li Zhixin

Pregnancy is usually associated with feelings of happiness and excitement, but for some moms-to-be it can become one of the most difficult times.

Depression during pregnancy is a serious condition that affects women's health. An estimated 10 to 30 percent of women may experience depression during pregnancy. Symptoms include sadness, hopeless feelings that persist, severe anxiety or a feeling of disconnection from the baby.

New research suggests a couple months of acupuncture might help reduce the severity of these symptoms during pregnancy.

Ease depression during pregnancy

Promise for pregnancy depression

The study found that women treated with depression-specific acupuncture had a 63 percent response rate compared to a 44 percent response rate in women treated with massage and acupuncture sessions that did not specifically target depression.

"We tested acupuncture as a stand-alone treatment, and the results are very positive," said Rachel Manber, author of the study and a professor at the Stanford University School of Medicine's Sleep Medicine Center in Redwood City, California.

However, because this is the first study of its kind and the acupuncture protocol used was specifically designed for this study, she said the results are not conclusive.

Many women are cautious about using medications during pregnancy, she said. Interpersonal psychotherapy is an option for women who are depressed during pregnancy, but this type of therapy is not always available, according to the study.

For the study, Manber and her colleagues recruited 150 pregnant women who were diagnosed with a major depressive disorder. All were between 12 and 30 weeks of gestation.

The women were randomly assigned to one of three groups: depression-specific acupuncture (52 women), control acupuncture (49 women) or massage (49 women). The depression-specific protocol was designed just for this study, and the control acupuncture was designed to avoid using acupuncture needles in any areas known to affect depression.

Treatment lasted for eight weeks. Women received treatment twice a week for the first four weeks, and then once a week for the next four weeks. Sessions lasted an average of 25 minutes.

The researchers found a 63 percent response rate in women who received depression-specific acupuncture, while the response rate was 44.3 percent in the control acupuncture and massage groups. A response rate was defined as a 50 percent reduction in depression symptoms, Manber said.

The full study is being published in this month's issue of *Obstetrics & Gynecology*.

"We found our acupuncture protocol was helpful, but that does not mean that any acupuncture for depression treatment will be effective. The quality of what you get can differ from one practitioner to another," Manber said.

Treat symptoms without medication

Mothers, whether having their first or fourth child, all need to be able to relax. Depression and stress can harm the health of the mother and child.

"Stress and depression can reduce blood flow to the fetus during pregnancy," said Liu Xiaowei, a doctor at Beijing Obstetrics Gynecology Hospital. "Depressed pregnant women are also more likely to have babies with sleep problems. Also, there is evidence that pregnant women suffering from depression are at an increased risk of premature delivery or of delivering an underweight baby."

Treating depression during pregnancy is important and pregnant women have many options.

1. Interpersonal therapy. Lean on family and friends. They care about you and will do whatever they can to help, even if it is just lending an ear. There's a wealth of parent education groups and communities that can give you the social support you need. "Reducing a pregnant mother's level of depression is not only her job, but her partner's as well. Talk things out with your partner — he's a part of this, too. Be sure to spend time together to nurture your relationship," she said.

2. Music therapy. Relaxing music was found to reduce psychological stress and relieve depression. Some studies showed that listening to soothing music such as lullabies, classical, nature and crystal sounds for at least 30 minutes a day may significantly help treat depression during pregnancy.

3. Color therapy. This is a complementary therapy that uses colors to balance the body's energy. Color therapists believe that certain colors like the warm colors of orange, yellow and red, when used in a pregnant woman's environment, may affect her mood. Some combinations are believed to treat depression.

4. Aromatherapy. Aromatherapy is based on the use of aromatic essences to regulate biochemical reactions in the body. It can be effective for mild depression to relieve fatigue or help with sleep. Common essential oils used to treat depression include lemon, rose, orange, grapefruit, basil and ylang ylang.

5. Exercise. Moderate exercise has a positive effect on depressed mothers. Exercise is known to stimulate the production of compounds that elevate mood, enhance serotonin levels and reduce cortisol levels, which together dispel depression. Exercising at least 10 to 30 minutes a day is enough to improve your condition.

"Before doing anything too strenuous, be sure to consult your doctor, but some simple stretching exercises are a good place to start," Liu said. "Walking is another simple form of exercise during pregnancy that may benefit your overall health."

Shortness of breath is common among pregnant women. "So if you feel like you've pushed yourself too far, take a rest then move at a slower pace," she said.

One more thing to keep in mind is that sex is also a physical activity, so there is no reason to halt sex after conception.

6. Healthy diet. Depression often is a result of dietary imbalance and a deficiency of essential nutrients. Try to avoid eating products rich in refined sugars and reduce your caffeine and alcohol intake. Talk to your obstetrician about using additional supplements such as folic acid, group B vitamins, vitamin C, calcium, iron, biotin and potassium.

Tips for pregnant women

1. Learn as much as you can about depression. Know what it is and what the symptoms are. If you experience any of these symptoms, contact your health-care provider immediately. Identifying depression in pregnant women is difficult because many symptoms are associated with pregnancy itself. Your doctor will be able to pinpoint the exact cause of your symptoms.

2. Get adequate sleep. Try not to drink

a lot right before bed. It will reduce your trips to the bathroom. Also, seize every opportunity to nap. Even a little bit of sleep will help reduce your stress. A pillow positioned between the knees and thighs will help keep your body aligned properly and aid in sleep.

3. Plan well. Avoid making your depression worse by feeling overwhelmed with upcoming planning, medical care and

expenses. Remember that people are caught off guard and ill prepared for a baby every day all over the world and they manage to make it through without losing their sanity. Create a list of what needs to be done and set deadlines. If you are concerned about providing clothing, a crib, a stroller, a car seat or other necessities for the baby, keep in contact with people who can help you to make arrangements.

CFP Photo

Town designed by pioneers

Home of first overseas workers feature Western-Chinese architecture

By Zhang Dongya

European-style architecture in northern Chinese cities is a product of foreign concessions. But in Chikan, an ancient town in Guangdong Province, the clusters of Western-looking buildings are a result of locals' hard work and ambition.

Chikan is home to some of the first Chinese nationals to find employment overseas – and who brought back foreign architectural styles. Strolling on the town's ancient streets, tourists will feel themselves being transported back in time, into an exotic place that could almost be oceans away.



Locals use the first floor of overhang buildings as a shop and live on the second or third floor.



Chikan's biggest attraction are blocks of century-old Western-Chinese buildings.

Photos provided by Yu Xiangfeng

Emigrant culture

Chikan, which dates back to the Song Dynasty (960-1279), is part of Kaiping, a county-level city in Guangdong. Kaiping is located in the southwestern portion of the Pearl River Delta, southwest of the capital Guangzhou.

From late Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) to the early Qing (1644-1911), Kaiping saw many of its residents work overseas, a trend that gave birth to a local "migrant culture," including architecture that featured both Chinese and Western elements as seen in the *diaolou*, or watchtowers.

These structures are fortified, multi-story towers that served a dual purpose in olden times: housing and protection from bandits. Now the towers' ground floors have been converted into shops while their upper floors have been turned into residences.

Today, 1,800 watchtowers remain standing in Kaiping. In 2007, they were added to the list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

The watchtower design was considered a break from the traditional village architecture characterized by low cottages, and injected variety into the flat, boring landscape of southern villages.

The latest statistics show that some 750,000 overseas Chinese hail from Kaiping. They are scattered in as many as 68 regions and countries, including Southeast Asia, the US and Canada. There is even a joke that there are more Kaiping natives living abroad than in Kaiping, which had a population of 680,000 in 2004.

In the Qing Dynasty, Kaiping residents went



abroad to offer their cheap labor at gold mines and railway construction companies in the US, Canada and Australia.

Upon their return to China, the workers built houses with Western elements; some of their roofs resemble those found in Rome, Greece and other European cities. But within these Western facades were Chinese portraits and paintings of local scenery.

Cluster of overhang buildings

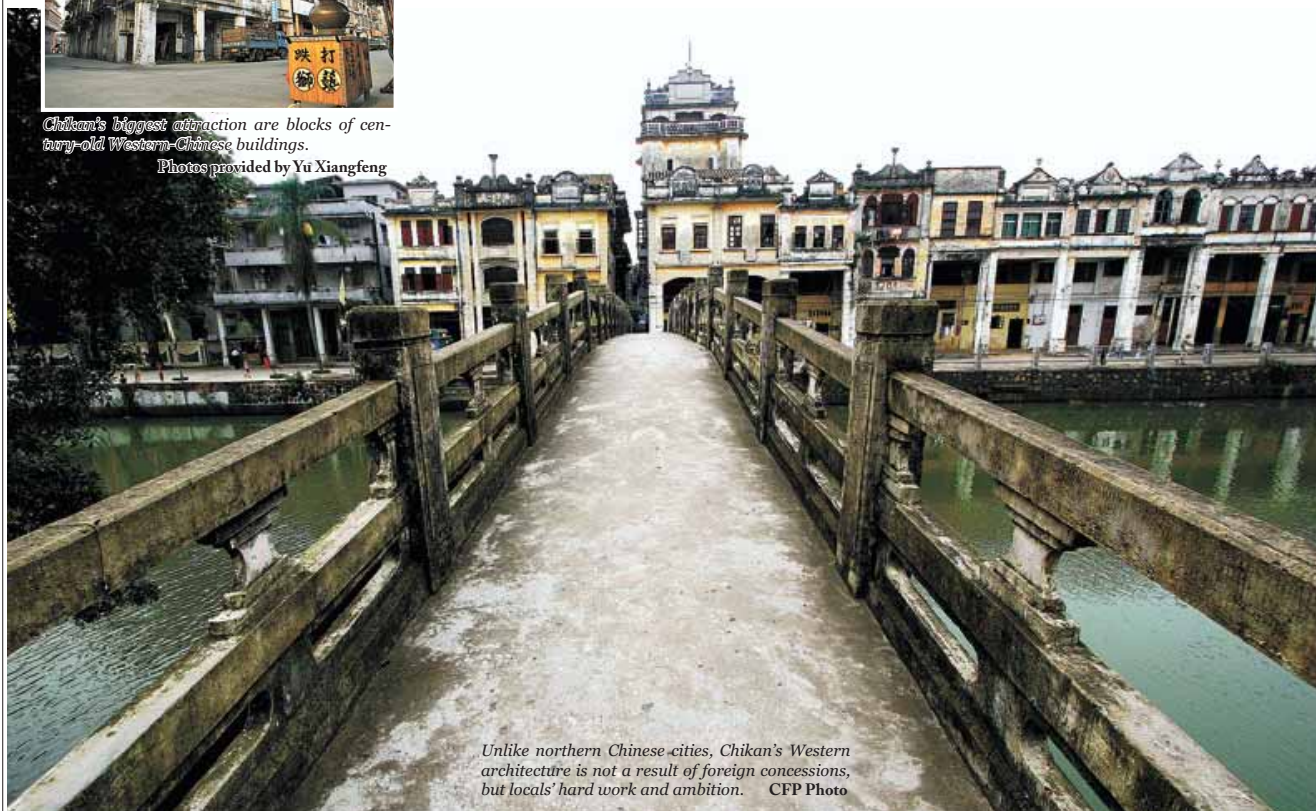
Located in the middle of Kaiping, Chikan is surrounded by red-soiled hills, thus its name, which means "red ridge."

One of the town's biggest attractions is a group of buildings wedding Chinese and Western architecture, constructed in early Qing, about 350 years ago.

It was at that time that two families – the Guan and Situ – moved to Chikan and helped the town's economy. In the Republic of China period (1912-1949), members of the two clans who had gone overseas came back and built houses mimicking European architecture as tributes to the development they saw in foreign countries. Slowly, single-story village houses began growing vertically.

These two- to three-story homes are called *qilou*, or overhang building, first created by Europeans in Southeast Asia to deal with the humidity they were unaccustomed to.

Continued on page 21...



Unlike northern Chinese cities, Chikan's Western architecture is not a result of foreign concessions, but locals' hard work and ambition. CFP Photo



In ancient times, Hui'anhe specialized in medicine for wounded kung fu fighters.

... continued from page 20

The foreigners used the first floor as a shop or warehouse and lived on the second or third floor, where there was more sunlight and less humidity. Some incorporated balconies on the second or third level.

In Chikan today, visitors will see blocks with hundreds of overhang buildings. Resembling scenes from a century ago, people live on the upper floors while the first floor hosts a business. These sites are considered a miniature of Guangzhou's foreign trade section as it appeared back in the 1920s.

On the northern part of town is a cluster of buildings that should not be missed. Amid old, Western-style homes, locals go about their age-old traditions of drying fish by the street. Around them, young people are busy repairing motorbikes, children run around and chickens cluck back and forth on the cobbled streets.

Renowned medicine shops like Hui'anhe draw the most tourists. An ancient chain of drugstores, Hui'anhe was frequented in ancient times by wounded kung fu fighters. Its Chikan store features a poster with the character *wu*, meaning martial art, as well as various kinds of ancient weapons.

Hui'anhe still uses traditional medicine containers instead of today's pill bottles. The former are big clay bottles with red cloth to seal the mouth. The drugstore still issues folk prescriptions that are said to be effective yet inexpensive.

After hundreds of years, however, some of the overhang buildings have been abandoned, overtaken by weeds. Some owners have no money to spend on renovation: their windows hang on by one hinge or their doors rot. A zigzag of clotheslines also mars the once-regal facade.

Other local attractions

Chikan reached the height of its prosperity after the War of Resistance Against Japan, in the 1940s. Public transportation and communications were rebuilt, natives who went overseas returned and opened businesses and foreign products flooded the market. Various new enterprises emerged: tea houses, restaurants, bars, doctor's clinics and jewelry stores.

But the civil war between the Nationalists and Communists, which began in 1945, upended that progress. The price of goods spiked, shops closed down one after the other and the local economy died.

In the ancient part of town are two well-preserved libraries built in honor of the Situ (1922) Guan (1929) families. Both are three-story buildings in Western architecture and include a bell tower: Situ's bell is from Boston, US, while Guan's comes from Germany.

The bells still function, although locals say the Situ library's bell sometimes chimes every half hour or not at all, in which case it is time to get it fixed.

Visitors can also see county guild offices during their stroll around town. In ancient times, Chikan served as a port, bringing in many merchants from Fujian Province. In time, the merchants encouraged other Fujian residents to do business there, resulting in a Fujian village and Fujian street in Chikan.

Later, traders from other Guangdong cities as well as those from Zhejiang Province also swarmed the town. They established county guilds, the most famous of which are Chaozhou, Gaozhou and Minzhe's.

Close to the blocks of overhang buildings is a "movie town" marked by an archway. The movie set features the characteristic architecture of various eras, from the Song to the Republic of China period. There are also ancient Chinese buildings and European houses, which have more elaborate decorations compared with the real thing in town.



The Guan family's 80-year-old library features western architecture and a bell tower.



Boisterous children and clucking chicken are common sights on the streets of Chikan.



Locals continue age-old traditions like drying fish on the street.



A vendor frying tofu on the sidewalk

Photos by Yu Xiangfeng

Travel information Getting to Chikan:

The first leg of the trip involves getting to Guangzhou, around three hours by plane and 20 hours by fast train from Beijing. From Guangzhou, take a long-distance bus to Jiangmen, where Kaiping is affiliated. **Admission:** 35 yuan to enter the town

Dining



Spring culinary delights

Two restaurants and the T-Bar at Traders Hotel have prepared culinary delights just for this spring. Enjoy the season's freshest ingredients in a small, sizzling pot. The Cantonese master chef's creative specialties await at The Oriental. Noodle aficionados have the most cause for celebration this spring with a collection of Hong Kong, Japanese, Italian and northern Chinese noodles. Enjoy classic continental tea at T-Bar with sandwiches, pastries and desserts accompanied by freshly brewed coffee and tea for 68 yuan (plus a 15 percent service charge).

Where: Traders Hotel Beijing, 1 Jianguomen Wai Dajie, Chaoyang District
Tel: 6505 2277



Tournedos Rossini Steak

Executive Chef Hans Gorsler of The Great Wall Sheraton Hotel is proud to present Tournedos Ros-

sini, a French dish purportedly created for the Italian composer Gioacchino Rossini. The dish uses tournedos of beef, pan-fried in butter and topped with foie gras and truffles and finished with Madeira demi-glace sauce.

Where: The French Bistro, The Great Wall Sheraton Hotel Beijing, 10 Dongsanhuan Bei Lu, Chaoyang District

Tel: 6590 5566 ext. 2119



Veneto cuisine

It has been said that Venice is the place everyone should see at least once. Veneto cuisine is simple and tasty: come try Venetian polenta calf's liver, the famous "Baccala Vicentino" and traditional risotto with sausage and cinnamon.

Where: The Regent Beijing, 99 Jinbao Jie, Dongcheng District
Tel: 8522 1888

Tea cuisine

China's tea culture has a long history, but dishes that incorporate tea as a raw material are opening a new chapter. Chef Zhang's new "tea" cuisine is a unique experience that will allow you to dine on the rich flavor of tea.

Where: Dragon Palace, Kempinski Hotel Shenyang, 109 Qingnian Jie, Shenhe District, Shenyang

Tel: 024 2298 8998

Spa

Essence of Bali, relaxing experience

Pamper yourself with an exotic, relaxing Balinese massage at QUAN Spa. Balinese massage uses a combination of gentle stretches, acupressure and aromatherapy oils to stimulate blood flow, oxygen and chi around your body, bringing deep relaxation and wellness. The package starts with a sea salt scrub and followed by Balinese massage with essential oils that will relax and soothe your body and soul. It ends with a sea mud wrap that will leave your skin soft and smooth.

Where: QUAN Spa, JW Marriott Hotel Beijing, 83 Jianguo Lu, Chaoyang District

Cost: 1,360 yuan for two and a half hours, subject to 15 percent service charge

Tel: 5908 8380



Aviation

More SIA routes to feature new cabin offerings

Singapore Airlines' Airbus A330-300 aircraft, featuring the Airline's latest product and service offerings, will soon operate on selected routes serving the Middle East, West Asia and North Asia. From March 28, the Airline will commence A330-300 services to Abu Dhabi, Jeddah and Kuwait as well as Male. Starting April 28, A330-300s will be deployed to Fukuoka and Taipei, and from May 1 the aircraft will also serve Colombo.

Jetstar first foreign carrier to fly Singapore-Shantou

Low fares leader Jetstar was the first foreign carrier to fly Singapore to Shantou, Guangdong Province, last month. Jetstar operates the new route as a three-times weekly A320 return service between Shantou Waisha Airport and Singapore Changi Airport. It is the first foreign carrier to operate international flights into Shantou Waisha Airport.

Cost: from SG \$208 (1,015 yuan; Jetstar's Jetsaver Light one-way fares from Singapore to Shantou)

Hotel



Weekend Escape

Escape from a week of hectic hustle and bustle and reward yourself with a great weekend. Grand Hyatt Beijing's weekend package includes a comfortable Grand Room with free upgrade to the next room level if available; international buffet breakfast at the Grand Cafe; one 60-minute massage with three choices of treatments; access to the hotel's Club Oasis, which features an indoor resort-style swimming pool; 500 yuan credit for use in the hotel's five restaurants or on room service; and late check-out until 4 pm.

Where: Grand Hyatt Beijing, 1 Dong Chang'an Jie, Dongcheng District

Cost: 1,590 yuan per night (valid for bookings on Fridays or Saturdays, subject to 15 percent surcharge, minimum stay of two nights)

Tel: 8518 1234



Lifestyle Suite package

The award-winning Hilton Beijing Wangfujing invites guests to upgrade their travel experience with a Lifestyle Suite at its chic and intimate property in the heart of the city. Book a minimum of two nights in a Lifestyle Suite and get access to the Hilton Executive Lounge, a complimentary one-hour treatment at The Spa and a choice of airport pick-up or drop-off, in addition to the hotel's stunning repertoire of facilities and amenities.

Where: Hilton Beijing Wangfujing, 8 Wangfujing Jie, Dongcheng District

When: Until December 31

Cost: 1,350 yuan per night

Tel: 5812 8888

New chef at Shangri-La's Kerry hotel

Roland Hofmann is the new executive chef at Shangri-La's Kerry Centre Hotel, Beijing. Prior to this appointment, Hofmann held a similar position at the Shangri-La Hotel, Changchun. The German-born Australian permanent resident, has 30 years of hospitality experience, primarily in kitchen operations. He has held key culinary positions at the Hotel Walther, Pontresina, Switzerland; Hilton Melbourne; and The Evason Hua Hin Resort and Spa, Thailand.

Tourism

Belle Mare Plage Resort

Belle Mare Plage Resort is one of the most popular resorts Constance, Mauritius. Protected by a coral reef, the lagoon is ideal for all water sports from swimming to snorkeling. Belle Mare Plage is an ideal hotel for families. Children receive a welcome present on arrival and the parents are given the new brochure "Traveling with children in Mauritius." Accommodations at Belle Mare Plage, from the standard rooms to the suites and villas, are equipped with quality amenities for babies and children.

(By Sun Feng)

Chinglish story

This column focuses on Chinglish mistakes in our daily life. If you have any experiences to share, send them to Wang Yu at wangyu2008@ynet.com.

Be careful about 'going somewhere'

By Huang Daohen

Sometimes, there is more than meets the eye – an adage that non-native English speakers would do well to remember. Just ask my friend Antonia, a translator at a local government's foreign affairs department.

Late last month, a British delegation involved in one of the municipality's important projects visited her city. Antonia, who has been an official translator for years, was sent to join the welcoming delegation at the airport.

After shaking hands with Antonia at the airport's VIP lounge, one of the British guests, a man in his 50s, politely interrupted her impromptu briefing. "Excuse me but I wonder if I can go somewhere?" he said.

Since it was the man's first trip to China, Antonia thought he was asking about

the possibility of sightseeing after business was concluded. "Of course, you can go anywhere in China after our meetings. I can help you with the itinerary," she said, beaming.

The man paused, then smiled, realizing there had been some miscommunication. "I meant, I need to use the lavatory."

My friend said she wanted to die of embarrassment on the spot. "And I call myself a translator! I hope he does not think I'm incompetent."

There is more than knowing the meaning of English words, Antonia said. "We have to know the slang as well."

After the episode at the airport, she went online and read up about other terms for toilet.

Generally, we have the phrase public lavatory to mean public toilets. Lavatory is a more polite word, but not as commonly used as toilet, while bathroom is more often seen in the written word.

In England, loo is the term for toilets in private residences. In the US, people refer to it as restroom.

There are also more genteel words like powder room, commonly used in olden times by well-bred ladies. You must remember hearing this line from a movie: "Excuse me for a minute. I need to powder my nose." Ladies will not really say what they intend to do in the lavatory, will they?

There are similarly colloquialisms that non-native speakers should remember, such as John and "see one's aunt." So the next time you hear someone say, "I just went to visit John (the John) or see aunt," he does not really mean seeing anyone, but actually heeding nature's call.

Blacklist

This is a column of words or phrases commonly misused by Chinese speakers. If you're planning to be an English teacher, reporter or employee of a multinational company, then watch out for this page each week.

1. The Couple

Professor Zhu Shida (ZS): We sometimes find ourselves at a loss as to how to cope with the subject "the couple." Are we to use the third person singular or the third person plural for the predicate? Concretely speaking, are we to say The couple is fine, or The couple are fine? This question puzzles beginners in particular. It is right to say: The couple spends their honeymoon in Sanya. It is equally right to say: The couple spend their honeymoon in Sanya. Here we have a sentence about the movie *Revolutionary Road*: Things really begin to unravel after the couple makes plans to move to Paris with their two young children.

Native speaker Steven Sandor (SS): Generally speaking, this should be a no-brainer. Because of the definite article we are talking about one specific couple. It may be a group of two people, but it is usually treated as a singular unit: The couple was picked up by police on a drunk and disorderly. Compare this with the obviously plural example: All couples can get a free drink during Thursday's happy hour.

2. Talk business

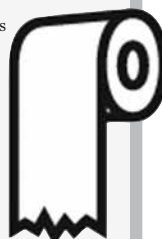
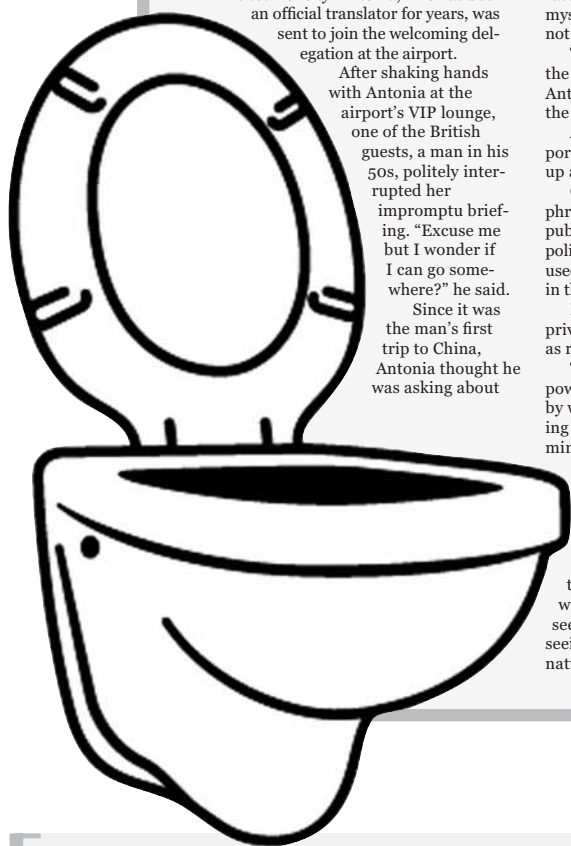
ZS: Is it wrong to say so? We have a rule for the usage of the verb "to talk" as an intransitive. When someone makes a speech about business, you say: He talks about business. You will think that the preposition is absolutely necessary for the phrase. However, the verb can also be used as a transitive: He talks business, without being wrongly judged. Here we have a passage from Edward M. Kennedy's narrative about a journey on a family cruiser: "He and Dad liked to go out on the Marlin, dad's motorboat, with a pitcher of chowder and another pitcher of daiquiris, and talk theology and world issues while they cruised."

SS: This very oral phrase most often appears as, "Let's talk nouns." Replace nouns with any topic you would like to pick apart: business, theology or grammar. If you ever write this exact phrase, it is probably a good idea to retain the contraction. "Let us talk business" is simply too stilted for this oral construct.

3. Thinking themselves as an elite people

ZS: We used to have the phrase "think of" to indicate what we are concerned about: He was a man who thought of nothing but business. But, the verb "to think" can also be used transitively where it is followed by a complex object. There is no need for the preposition as in "thinking themselves an elite people." Consider this common example: He deems himself a very successful man. In many uses, the old "think of" construct has been replaced by the new verb "rethink": compare the drawn out "I shall think of this issue again" to the more concise "I shall rethink this issue."

SS: The writer mistakenly dropped a preposition into a variant of the very common phrase "to think oneself." Kill the "as" and all will be well.



Chinglish on the way

This column aims to identify Chinglish in public areas. If you see any Chinglish signs, please send a picture of it to wangyu2008@ynet.com together with your name and address.

Don't scream!

By Tiffany Tan

I wonder how business is doing at this dental clinic. Putting "DON'T SCREAM" on the wall is not a good way to reassure patients who are already wary of dentists to begin with.

I can also see it perpetuating dental phobia among the younger generation; how do you answer a grade-schooler who is only learning to read and who asks, "Mommy, why does the sign say Don't Sc-sc-scream?"

Contrary to what it might say, the sign does not mean to commit business suicide. The original Chinese sentence, "Qing wu xuanhua," means Maintain silence. But xuanhua alone means great din, uproar, hoopla.



In these scenarios you can easily picture someone screaming, thus Don't scream is born.

Since this clinic is somewhere in China, it's not wrong to suppose it has

more local patients than foreign ones. For patients who cannot read English, ignorance is bliss.

The rest, they can suffer in silence. Or find a non-Chinglish clinic.

**Movie of the week**

This may be an anti-war movie, but without special effects and battles it sometimes comes off as a comedy.

The movie plays out as a buddy flick with George Clooney, who plays his usual role, and Ewan McGregor as they head around Iraq not really knowing what they are looking for and getting into loads of hilarious situations. Jeff Bridges, the latest Oscar winner, plays a hippie US army commander who hopes to raise a special team able to use love as a weapon.

Some people say the movie has no plot: these viewers have no sense of humor.

Synopsis

The story follows broken-hearted journalist Bob who goes on the job to Iraq to prove to his ex-wife he isn't weak. There, he meets Lyn Cassidy, a "psychic" soldier for the US government, trained by his hippie instructor Billy to use his mind, peace and love to overcome hairy military situations.

After their adventure, Bob returns to work as a reporter and writes an article about his entire experience with Lyn. However, the only portion of the story to be aired on the news was how the captives were forced to repeatedly listen to the Barney & Friends theme song.

Vocabulary

1. **power outlets:** American English for wall sockets that provide electricity
2. **Black Op:** secret operation
3. **doodle:** a sketch or unfocused drawing made while a person's attention is otherwise occupied

(By Wang Yu)



The Men Who Stare at Goats (2009)

**Scene 1**

(Before heading to Iraq, Bob meets Lyn Cassidy who his last interviewee mentioned is the leader of the psychic spies.)

Lyn Cassidy (L): Let me ask you something. What color were the chairs in the hotel bar? You were in there for hours. What color were the chairs?

Bob Wilton (B): Green.

L: Beige.

L: How many lights are there in this room? A Super Soldier wouldn't have to look. He would just know.

B: A Super Soldier?

L: A Jedi Warrior. He would know where all the lights were. He could walk through a room and he could tell you how many **power outlets** (1) there were. People are walking around with their eyes closed. At Level One, we were trained to instantly absorb all details.



B: What's, uh, what's a Jedi Warrior?

L: You're looking at one.

B: You're a Jedi Warrior?

L: That's correct.

B: I don't ... I don't know what that means.

L: I'm Sergeant First Class Lyn Cassidy, Special Forces, retired. In the 80s,

I was trained at Fort Bragg under a secret initiative codenamed "Project Jedi." The objective of the project was to create Super Soldiers. Soldiers with superpowers. We were the first generation of the New Earth Army.

B: You've got superpowers?

L: That's correct.

B: Wait a minute. What you're saying is that you were a psychic spy, like Lacey?

L: We prefer the term "Remote Viewer."

B: How does that work?

L: Well, every Jedi had different techniques. Mel Landau used to visualize packing all his troubles into a little suitcase to clear his mind. Steve Cuttle recited a Bible verse which was ...

B: What about you?

L: I find ... I find drinking helps. And ... and if I'm listening to classic rock ...

B: Oh, yeah? Like who?

L: I like Boston. Boston usually works.

Scene 2

(Bob and Lyn are caught by some local robbers in Iraq.)

B: We're gonna die. We're gonna be killed by Al Qaeda.

L: I don't think they're Al Qaeda.

B: What the hell do you know? You don't know. You don't know! You don't know anything! This is all your fault!

L: Bob, there's something I have to tell you. When I said that I was retired from the unit, that was a lie. I'm on a mission. DeWitts was

just my cover. I've been reactivated. I couldn't tell you because this is a **Black Op** (2). But I think you have a role to play. I think that's why you're here.

B: You're an idiot. You know why I'm here? I just wanted to get into Iraq so I could prove to my wife that I wasn't a ... and now I'm gonna die. I'm gonna die. And she's right. I'm such a f--head!

L: Bob, have you ever heard of "Optimum Trajectory"?

B: What?

L: "Optimum trajectory." Your life is like a

river. If you're aiming for a goal that isn't your destiny, you'll always gonna be swimming against the current. Young Gandhi wants to be a stock-car racer? It's not gonna happen. Little Anne Frank wants to be a High School teacher. Tough little Anne. That's not your destiny. But you will go on to move the hearts and minds of millions. Find out what your destiny is and the river will carry you. Now, sometimes events in life give an individual clues as to where their destiny lies.

Like those little **doodles** (3) you just happened to draw. It's the Ajna chakra, the third eye. The symbol of the Jedi.

Scene 3

(The two men are saved by a unit of the US Army. In the camp, Lyn meets his old colleagues including his tutor Bill. However, it is Larry, Lyn's enemy in the unit, who is in charge now.)

B: Lyn, what you're gonna do?

L: It's too late, I'm dying, Bob.

B: No, you're not gonna die. I don't believe you can be killed by ... by mail order, Dim Sum, or ...

L: Dim Mak.

B: Dim Mak. Whatever. You can't just be tapped in the shoulder ...

L: It's cancer.

B: What? All I know it's the Dim Mak that

caused it.

L: It's cancer. At least that's what the doctors said. It's different ways of looking at different names for a reality.

(Lyn takes of the eagle feather that Bill gave to him)

L: Give that to Bill.

B: I don't deserve it.

L: Take it.